THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

NOVEMBER 35¢

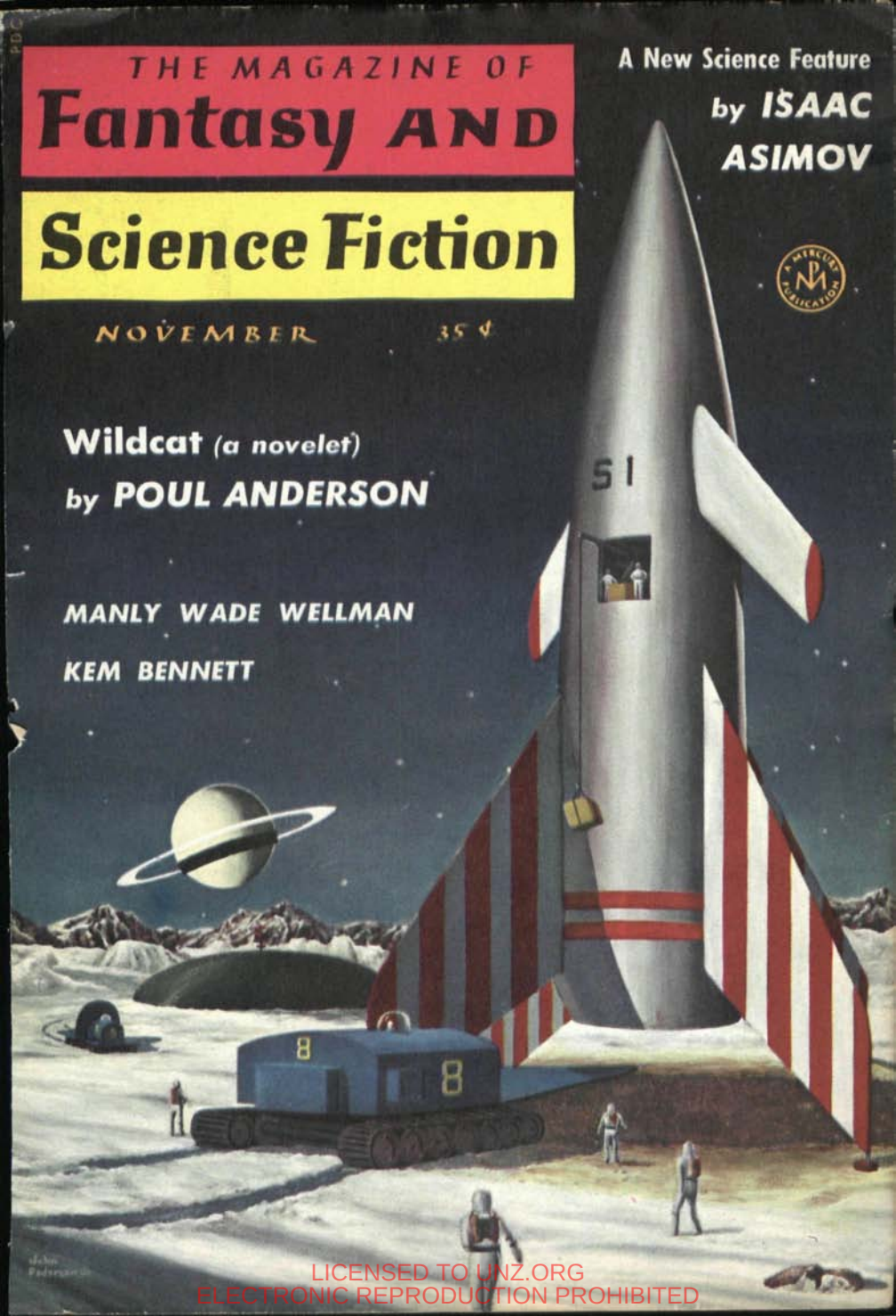
A New Science Feature
by ISAAC ASIMOV

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

Wildcat *(a novelet)*
by **POUL ANDERSON**

MANLY WADE WELLMAN

KEM BENNETT



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THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 15, No. 5 NOVEMBER

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Coming next month. . .

Virtually all of the top science fiction writers of our day have appeared in these pages — we believe in variety and quality, and seek it everywhere. Algis Budrys is one of the few exceptions to our coverage — an omission we repair next month with a new novelet called *The Eye and the Lightning.* It is a taut tale of a hard future, and offers fresh evidence of Mr. Budry's increasing stature. . . . There will also be a new fantasy by that master of suspense, Cornell Woolrich — *Somebody's Clothes — Somebody's Life* . . . a shocker about returning spacemen — *Explorers We,* by Philip K. Dick . . . the adventure of growing up on a wandering star ship — *Wish Upon a Star,* by Judith Merril . . . an unsettling story — *The Pink Caterpillar,* by Anthony Boucher . . . a new science article by Isaac Asimov . . . and varied, entertaining others.

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Kem Bennett turns, in the following, from the delightfully light-hearted mood of his two previous F&SF stories (The Soothsayer, *August, 1952, and* Rufus, *February, 1956) to a sober, startlingly realistic tale of the first man to ride a satellite. Mr. Bennett's background qualifies him superbly to write of danger and the imminence of death. He served for seven wartime years in the British Army as a gunner, parachutist, undercover agent, and the like; he twice entered occupied France (once he very nearly stayed), and emerged with a number of medals testifying to other high adventures. None, perhaps, as high as that of Yourko Andropov, who in the imminence of death discovered a hint of the transcendence of life . . .*

A DIFFERENT PURPOSE

by Kem Bennett

NOT FEELING IN THE LEAST LIKE a doomed man, Yourko Andropov ate a hearty breakfast. This was on the terrace of the Red Air Force villa at Alushta on the Crimean Riviera, and he was wearing pyjamas. Below the terrace, at the foot of rocks falling a hundred feet, the Black Sea, belying its name, was a shining, breeze-ripped azure. The day promised to be pleasantly hot. It was May 1959.

After his breakfast Yourko lit a cigarette and contemplated the fact that the day was entirely his; until midnight he was free. Precisely what he intended to do with his day he had not yet decided, and, since it was an exceptional day, quite possibly his last, he was feeling that it would be wrong to be too casual about it. Yet somehow casualness of itself attracted him; certainly he wanted no drama.

Without having made any plans and not letting the fact disturb him, he decided to get dressed. He rose to his feet, flicking his half-smoked cigarette away so that it sailed over the balustrade of the terrace and down on to the rocks below. Then he turned and went into the villa. In his cool, clean, bare bedroom he dressed slowly and deliberately, choosing a light summer uniform of smock and baggy trousers and taking trouble over such things

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as the arrangement of the pleats under the belt and the medals he was entitled to wear on his chest. Watching himself as he made movements that were normally quite automatic and habitual, he felt very alive, very tranquil and very content.

Yourko Andropov was of average height, fair, strong and healthy—exceptionally healthy. He was thirty. He had blue eyes and a long scar across his forehead, acquired when he was thrown from a crashed aircraft in China six years previously. He was a Red Army flyer, a major, and he had flown with the North Korean forces in the Korean War.

From the villa, long flights of rock-hewn steps made a short-cut down to one end of Alushta's main street. Yourko came down them slowly, taking his time, looking out over the white houses and the poplar trees of the public gardens. He made his way to a big café overlooking the beach. Here it was that he had a rendezvous with Olinka for midday. It was now just after ten. He sat down and ordered a *kvas*. After a quarter of an hour he was joined by an acquaintance, a convalescent government doctor from Smolensk, with whom he played a game of chess. He won.

At twelve, Olinka arrived. She was a girl of Yourko's own age, half Uzbek and dark in contrast with his fairness. She was a member of a troupe of Uzbek folk-dancers, in Alushta on a rest-vacation as a reward for a successful tour of Hungary and Roumania. Yourko had known her for six days. There was a strong bond of affection between them already and they pleased one another physically. Also, they made each other laugh.

They swam, Yourko taking a man's pride in the glances of admiration that Olinka's dancer's body earned from the onlookers. After swimming they went to the largest restaurant in Alushta and ate an expensive lunch. Then, before they had time to start feeling sleepy, they bought tickets for a motor-boat trip along the coast which took them to Yalta and beyond, to botanical gardens and a bathing beach. They returned to Alushta in the evening in time to dine off caviar sandwiches and sweet Ukranian champagne. Finally, after a walk in the sage-scented moonlight, they went back to the Air Force villa and let themselves quietly into Yourko's bedroom.

Two hours later, at midnight, Yourko kissed Olinka goodbye. She did not know where he was going. She asked questions. Yourko said, "I will try to write, Olinichka," and she nodded, gazing at him. He left.

At the foot of the villa steps a Zis limousine was waiting.

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Yourko climbed in. A few hours later, in a military transport flying eastwards above the Caspian Sea, Yourko went over the day in his mind, taking it event by event and savoring it. It had been a strange day—a good day, he decided. And yet why strange, since he had done nothing in the least remarkable? The answer came with a sudden clarity; during the last few hours he had done all the things that a man could do—lived and breathed, seen, heard and smelled, used his muscles and his mind, eaten, drunk and made love—also, and this was the secret, he had done everything with the awareness that it was precious. That made the difference.

Presently, thinking of Olinka, he fell asleep.

The launching site was cleared and the count-down had started. *Dévyat, vósem, sem, shest, pyat, chetyre* . . .

With a sense of extraordinary detachment Yourko heard the measured words in his earphones, felt his pulses throbbing, felt himself swallowing in an effort to ease the dryness of his throat, recognized the voided feeling that intense apprehension brings to the pit of the stomach. He was watching himself be afraid.

Tri, dva, ODIN!

Watchers in the observation bunkers, although looking through tinted glass panels, were dazzled, and half-deafened.

Inside the tall rocket, after a momentary hesitancy, a wavering that lasted a second in time and forever in Yourko Andropov's memory, he became aware of an up-thrust, a surging, crushing, elevator-gone-mad feeling that made him groan and sweat and suffer.

By six that evening, less than twenty-four hours after Yourko had said goodbye to Olinka in Alushta, the world knew that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had succeeded in establishing a man-carrying satellite, in a near-perfect orbit around the Earth. They called it 1959 Gamma.

Yourko had tilted his all-purpose contour couch into a seat and had turned himself round from a prone to a sitting position. This, in itself, had been a laborious process; his body and head and the special high-altitude suit that he was wearing were so encumbered with wires, tubes and cables that he was capable of moving only with a slow, robot-like deliberation.

The chamber he was sitting in was cylindrical, six inches higher than his seated height and about five feet in diameter. Beside him, built into one arm of his seat, were controls for radio, tape-recorder, temperature, television

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screen and the shutters which would open and close his viewing portholes. On the other side of the seat, within easy reach of his right hand, were banks of instruments, dials and gauges and, below them, serried ranks of switches. These controlled the manual or semi-automatic equipment that the satellite was carrying. Other equipment aboard her was fully automatic.

On Yourko's suit itself were controls by which he could feed himself, dose himself, if necessary, with pills, and to some degree regulate his oxygen supply.

He had been in space for just over six hours. He was feeling slightly sick and slightly dizzy, but quite unafraid. He was not over-excited or over-awed; that had passed much earlier. For this experience he had been trained endlessly, week after week and month upon month. As a result he had brought familiarity with him into the empyrean, and that accomplished the rather sad miracle of making his situation seem ordinary.

He was now finishing the task of feeding a series of observations into an instrument that would transmit them in code to Earth. An hour earlier he had talked to the world over the radio; they had told him that his signals were being picked up, amplified and re-broadcast by every radio network on the face of the Earth. He had described for humanity Earth herself as he saw her, a brilliant, shimmering immensity, swathed in cloud veils and patterned with ocean and continent; still too big, even at his altitude, for him to be able to see the whole of her at one time through the narrow observation windows. He had later described the stars, "Shining," he had said, "with unimaginable brilliance," and yet, still only stars, remote and splendidly unapproachable. He had tried to be lyrical, in keeping with the occasion, but had found himself becoming repetitive and adjectival, and had quickly returned to a correct military matter-of-factness.

Now, for some hours, there was little or nothing for him to do. The voice of a technician, making a periodical check, sounded in his radio ear-phones: *"Allo, 1959 Gamma."* The voice was filled with a consciousness of the importance of the occasion. *"Allo,* Comrade Major Andropov, is all well?"

"Fine," Yourko answered laconically. "Tell the doctors that the gravity-sickness is wearing off."

"Yes, Comrade Major."

Silence came down again.

Yourko noted that the dizziness he had been feeling, like the gravity-sickness, was decreasing. He was pleased. The dizziness had brought with it a sense of mental impairment, as small but as worrying as a slight headache,

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which he was glad to be rid of. He still, of course, felt strange and weightless, but his human adaptability, a small miracle in itself, was hard at work turning the strange into the familiar. In a few hours, he felt sure, the process would be completed and he would find himself acclimatized.

In a few hours . . . the thought recurred, this time with a very different flavor. He saw hours stretching ahead of him, and days. A sudden whiplash of panic struck at his heart and he felt loneliness flood his whole being. The sensations took him by surprise, making him catch his breath. With an effort of will, Yourko caught hold of himself, fighting down the panic, withdrawing from the loneliness. There was danger in admitting to loneliness; he knew this well. He sought for a distraction.

Among the controls and selector-switches at his left hand there was one with which he could project cinema films onto the screen of his television viewer; there was a second which would project in a similar way the pages of a selection of micro-photographed books, and yet a third with which he could play recorded music to himself. The psychologists had thought of everything—or had tried to.

He moved a selector and pressed a button. The title page of a book appeared on the screen in front of him. It was a work on astronomy; the latest. It was neither abstruse nor condescendingly over-simplified, and Yourko had been looking forward to reading it for several months. The frontispiece consisted of a photograph of a spiral nebula, taken by the Americans with their giant telescope at the Mount Palomar observatory. Yourko leaned slightly forwards in order to see better. Admiration stirred in him, both for the nebula and for the American technology which had made the photograph possible. Presently he glanced up at his observation ports, now shuttered. He chuckled. If ever a man had been in the right place to read astronomy . . .

The satellite 1959 Gamma made a complete circuit of the Earth every 97 minutes. For the scientists and technicians on watch below in the heart of the Kara-Kum desert, a day and a night had gone by since the launching. The satellite, however, had passed from night to day nearly fifteen times during the same twenty-four hours. For some reason, which he did not attempt to analyze, this fact was one of the first things to get on Yourko's nerves.

Another was his enforced immobility. During his training he had spent longer and longer periods, culminating in a full

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week, strapped into just such a seat as he was sitting in now and wearing precisely the same equipment. But that had been training, make-believe—a tiresome endurance test and no more. This, the real thing, was turning out to be different. Already his body was yearning for movement, and already it was becoming more and more difficult to ignore its demands.

For a large part of each day he had plenty to do. In order to save weight, a great number of the satellite's instruments had been fitted with manual controls. Roughly every six hours, when he was within easy radio range of the launching site and research station in Turkmenistan, Yourko transmitted a series of coded observations which he had spent the previous two hours in taking and recording. His observations included measurements of the Earth's gravitational and magnetic fields and its electrical charges; they also included measurements and analyses of cosmic rays and solar radiation. They included meteor counts. In between taking readings from half a hundred dials and instruments, he also had to remember to take photographs with one or another of the several semi-automatic cameras which the satellite was carrying. These photographs were of the sun, the earth and its cloud formations, the moon, the planets and the stars. Lastly, he had to take radar readings at stated intervals. Once in every twenty-four hours he was permitted to miss a transmission so that he could sleep.

In spite of being so fully occupied and in spite of the fact that his off-duty hours could be spent watching films or reading, Yourko, after he had been in space for less than two days, had to face the fact that he was becoming bored and restless to a degree that he had never known before. The recording of his observations, although they took time, made small demands upon his intellect; he was not a scientist and the routines had been intentionally simplified as far as possible. In many cases he did not know what purpose his readings would serve, nor what use they could be put to. He came to look upon them as chores, and from that moment they became flat and unexciting.

In the evening of his second day, trying to concentrate upon the projected image of his book on astronomy, he felt a sudden and powerful impulse to tear off his helmet, tear away the wires and tubes from his face and chest, and to drive his fist through the shining, shimmering glass of the television screen. He controlled himself, lying back, closing his eyes, forcing himself to relax. After a while he sat up, switched

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off the micro-book projector and turned on in its stead a recording of Prokoviev's Classical Symphony. It was music that he loved. For a few minutes he enjoyed it, but then found himself not listening, not caring, coming to think of the sounds in his ears as noise — as something to be borne. With a savage sideways sweep of his left hand he cut off the recording.

Yourko lay back, panting slightly, staring fixedly at the green metallic ceiling of his cell, not more than a foot and a half from his nose. It seemed to press in and down upon him. What was wrong? In training he had put up with even more than he was putting up with now. Men had survived solitary imprisonment in smaller cells and under far worse living conditions for months running into years. Why, therefore, after a mere forty-eight hours, was he feeling demoralized?

After ten minutes of intensive thought Yourko had to confess to himself that he did not know. Ideas had come into his mind . . . could it be the absence of a proper spacing of night and day? Could it be the air he was breathing, used and re-used, purified and re-purified until it was as flat in the nostrils as cotton wool? Could it be his food, a diet perfected after hundreds of experiments by the doctors and yet now to his taste almost too insipid to be swallowed? To each of these questions his logical mind answered no. But he knew that it was not he that was answering, but the scientists, the theoreticians, answering through him.

Something was wrong. Something was dragging him down. He knew it. It frightened him. He thought of plants taken from the soil and slowly withering. Was that it? Must a man projected into space, away from the Earth and away from his kind, wither like an uprooted plant?

He found himself prepared to admit the possibility.

In the morning of the third day, Yourko was awakened from a drugged sleep by the noise of his call-sign in his ear-phones. He heaved himself into a sitting position and spoke in reply.

A voice that he recognised answered, "*Zdrasvuyté*, Yourko. How goes goes it?" It was Yumashev, the Head Psychiatrist and an old friend.

"*Zdrasvuyté*, Feodor," Yourko answered. "I am still alive. It goes as well as can be expected."

There was a short silence. Then Yumashev asked, "You sound depressed, Yourko—are you?"

"A little."

"Have you used any of the antidepressants in your drug supplies?"

"Yes," Yourko answered. The

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previous evening, to kill the fear that he had felt growing in him, he had taken two amphetamine tablets. Their effect had been three hours of frantic, uncontrollable mental activity. His brain had buzzed like a bluebottle in a cardboard box. "They upset me," he said. "I shall not be able to use them again."

"Have you other symptoms—apart from the depression?" Yumashev asked quietly.

"Yes, I feel a terrible restlessness some times, and other times a terrible dullness," Yurko said. "It is much worse than it ever was in training, Feodor."

Yumashev paused to think. Yourko could hear him breathing. He noted, but dully and without astonishment, that it was extraordinary that he should be in space, out of the Earth's atmosphere, and yet able to hear the breathing of a scientist in Russia. "Perhaps," Yumashev was saying with a tinge of reluctance in his voice, "perhaps we should be thinking of bringing you down, Yourko. What do you think?"

Trying to bring me down, Yourko thought. The loss of velocity and the fall back to Earth would be the highpoint of danger in the whole operation. Its prospect suddenly terrified him. "No," he said harshly. "Not yet." He knew that it was fear that had spoken, not judgment, and that he should have said yes.

"I shall ask again in six hours, Yourko," Yumashev said.

"Very well."

It was now that Yourko Andropov started to live by his pride. During that day, his third in the satellite, a phonograph record in his brain reminded him over and over again that it was unthinkable that he should give up before six days had elapsed. Six days was the target; his batteries, food and oxygen were sufficient for six days, and six days he had to endure. He reminded himself that he had been chosen for the task from thousands of others, that it had cost untold millions of rubles and the efforts of the best scientific brains in Russia to put him where he was, and that every hour he stayed in space increased the glory of the achievement. He was a patriot. Without being a fanatic, he believed in Soviet Russia, in science, and in progress, and he felt deeply that to betray the trust that had been put in him would be unthinkable. He was also an Army officer.

The combination of pride and inbuilt discipline kept him going for that day.

During the fourth day Yourko realized that his body was weakening. Until then his troubles had been psychological; he had felt no loss of physical ability. Now the weakening had begun. Curi-

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ously enough, it had the effect of making him more comfortable, because, like a sick man, he relaxed instinctively and rested more.

He felt too apathetic and listless to make the usual readings for the second of his six-hourly transmissions, and he did not. Then, just before the transmission was due, pride faltered at last and he was able to think again with comparative clarity. It would not, he realized calmly, be either sensible or patriotic to endure beyond the bitter end. His experience had made him immensely valuable—alive. Dead he would be valueless.

He knew that he was dying—slowly, perhaps, but quite surely.

When Yumashev came up to talk to him on the radio, he asked to be brought down.

Head Psychiatrist Yumashev tapped on the door of the Controller's office. *"Mozhno!"* Yumashev entered.

Neresenko, the Controller, a squat gray-haired man of fifty, sat at a big desk on which was placed a small gold model of a satellite in orbit. It had been presented to him by the Academy of Sciences for his achievement in launching Sputnik ahead of the American Vanguard in 1957. Neresenko was not a scientist; he was an enthusiast. Yumashev did not like him.

"Andropov has requested that he be brought down."

Neresenko rose from his chair. "Ah, so?" He had to look up to talk to Yumashev, who was very tall, thin and stooping. Neresenko did not mind; his convictions of superiority and his self-confidence were more than enough to compensate in him for the need to look up at tall men. "Do we then have to bring him down?

Yumashev said, "It is my professional opinion that we should."

Neresenko grunted. For some moments he paced the floor with his hands clasped behind his back. When he turned to face Yumashev again, his eyes were shrewd and his face expressionless. "This is confidential," he said. "It happens that Comrade Krushchev was told yesterday that we hoped to keep 1959 Gamma in orbit for the full six days. Comrade Krushchev was so delighted with the news that he passed it on to the foreign press representatives. If we bring Andropov down now, in the fourth day, much face will be lost. Do you understand me, Feodor? Do you still think we should bring him down?"

'I think that if you leave him up there for two more days he will either die or go mad," Yumashev said. He kept emotion out of his voice. Neresenko did not like emotion.

"How have you arrived at this opinion?"

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"I have had many talks with Andropov. It has not been difficult to detect the strain that he has been feeling; he has even confessed it openly to me. I know him well. He is not a man to cry out before he is hurt."

Neresenko shrugged. "Very well," he said. "I respect your opinion. I think we should have a meeting. Will you please arrange it? I think the whole medical staff should attend."

There was a silence. Yumashev took a deep breath and raised his head to speak. At the last moment he changed his mind. He knew that it was useless to protest. Neresenko was covering up. Neresenko wanted unanimity. Well, he should have it. He, Yumashev, knew that the other doctors would back him up. The trouble was that it would take time . . .

He nodded. "In an hour, then?"

Neresenko said, "If you can arrange it so quickly. Remember that I want all the doctors."

"You shall have them," Yumashev said and left the office.

In 1959 Gamma, Yourko Andropov was feeling better. They were going to bring him down. The knowledge had acted in him like a pain-killer. He felt appreciably weaker but did not mind. It had not occurred to him that his request might not be granted.

He now felt little fear of the descent. Among his supplies of drugs he had an anaesthetic injection. He intended to use it. Hitherto pride might have restrained him, but Yourko's pride had been battered by four days in space. He had come to understand many things, the most important of which was that he, as an individual, was very small in the scheme of things and almost powerless. Four days earlier he had thought that he had chosen to be launched into space. Now, without having had to think about it, he had realized that the choice had never really been his. He had been asked if he wished to volunteer. He had said 'yes' because to have said 'no' would have been astonishing, a breaking of rules, a rejection of glory. This, he now understood, had not been a choice.

And now, at this very moment, he was more powerless to change his destiny, probably, than he had even been. Whether he lived or died depended entirely upon others — entirely! The knowledge was a comfort; it absolved him from responsibility. He no longer had to try.

Idly, without urgency, he wondered how he should spend the rest of the time that remained to him in space. For a moment he was tempted by the idea of music; he was too weak to read and he suspected that any film, in his present mood, would irritate him. His hand moved out to switch on the tape-recorder.

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Then he hesitated. A thought had come to him that had feeling in it, and logic; ought he not to be looking at the stars? Ought he not to be using, for the last time, the privilege that he shared with no other human being—that of being able to see the full glory of the heavens undimmed by atmosphere? Instead of switching on music, he pressed the button controlling the opening of the shutters of the observation ports. The satellite was on the darkened side of the Earth and all the shutters opened. Had it been on the light side, those facing the sun would have remained closed, automatically locked to protect him from the unfiltered power of solar radiation.

He turned his head. Across two of the portholes and half of a third the Milky Way made a shimmering ribbon of light. A galaxy, Yourko thought. He remembered what he had been reading in the book of astronomy—while he had still been reading. Not only were the stars innumerable, but the galaxies also—or so the book had said. Galaxy upon galaxy . . . each at least as big as our own, many far bigger. Galaxies being born, galaxies dying. Suns blazing, suns fading. Planets cooling. Atmospheres forming. Life appearing, mosses and lichens on rocky outcrops, cells multiplying in lava-warmed water . . .

This, Yourko thought, is what I am looking at now. All of it.

He singled out a brilliant star and watched it move across from one side of a porthole to the other. It seemed to be moving, but then, of course, it was he that was moving . . . Yet the star was moving too, so the book said . . .

A computer ticked and clattered. Dvinski, the Head Astrophysicist, crossed the room with a slip of paper which he passed across to Neresenko. Dvinski was a scientist of brilliance, but as a man he was nervous and given to unexpected outbursts of buffoonery. "That is the soonest we can get him down, Comrade Controller," he said. He snickered and pulled a funny face. "Needless to say we don't want him to finish in North America—or in the middle of the ocean."

Without looking at it, Neresenko passed the paper to Yumashev. He was fond of such gestures; disinterestedness indicated aloofness and self-control, aloofness and self-control were the hallmarks of the leader; ergo he, Neresenko, was a leader.

"Twenty-two forty-four," Yumashev said. "Two hours from now. If you will excuse me, Comrade Controller, I should like to radio the time to Yourko."

"I'll come with you," Neresenko said.

In the radio room, Feodor Yumashev sat down beside a

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microphone. Presently one of the technicians gave him a signal, a lifted thumb.

"*Allo!*" Yumashev said. "Yourko! This is Feodor. Can you hear me?"

There was no answer. Yumashev frowned. He tried again. "*Allo,* 1959 Gamma. Yourko! Yourko! *Allo,* Yourko! Are you all right, Yourko? Can you hear me?"

No answer. Yumashev turned to the man in charge. "He does not answer. Could his batteries have failed?"

"No, Comrade Doctor, we are receiving his automatic signals."

"Could his transmitter have broken down?"

"Yes, that is a possibility."

"Just read out the time to him," Neresenko said. "It is possible that he can hear but cannot answer."

"*Allo,* Yourko," Yumashev said, slowly and distinctly into the microphone. "We are bringing you down, Yourko. Do you hear me? We are bringing you down. You will start decelerating at ten forty-four. I repeat; you will start decelerating at ten forty-four."

Yourko's voice came suddenly from a loudspeaker. It was loud, but the loudness came by amplification, not from natural causes. Yumashev jumped.

"No," said Yourko's loud-soft, strong-weak voice. "No, Feodor. Not yet."

"Why not, Yourko?" Yumashev said into the microphone. "Tell me why not."

Neresenko was smiling. Yumashev had seen the smile begin and could feel it now, between his shoulder blades.

Silence.

Yumashev spoke again. "Yourko! Why should we not bring you down? You asked for it, Yourko. Do you not remember asking?"

"It is difficult to explain," Yourko answered. His voice was weaker, and strange. Yumashev scowled and cursed under his straggly moustache. . . . "I have something that I am doing," Yourko's voice continued. "I cannot explain. It is very important. It has to do with the universe, Feodor. It is very important. I cannot explain. Not now. Later. Later . . ."

Yumashev was on his feet, facing Neresenko. "He must still be brought down," he shouted. "Now more than ever. Did you not hear his voice? I insist. I invoke my authority as Head Psychiatrist."

"But he asked not to be, Feodor," Neresenko protested. "My friend, don't be unreasonable . . ."

"Will you have a sane man tonight or a madman tomorrow?" Yumashev's anger came through in his voice. "That is the choice, Neresenko! Which will give you the greater glory? Think!"

Neresenko thought. He frowned, pinching his upper lip. Then he shrugged. "I leave it to you, Yumashev," he said. "If you wish to take the responsibility . . ."

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In space, 1959 Gamma's antennae folded. Jets of high-pressure gas turned her. She came round through a hundred-and-eighty degrees until her pointed nose was facing away from her direction of travel. In Turkmenistan a circuit was completed at the precise milli-second predetermined by the computers. Rockets flared from the satellite's square-cut tail.

In the Kara-Kum desert, Yumashev was watching. He had his eye pressed against the eye-piece of a powerful telescope. Presently he straightened, and then abruptly turned away. This was the moment of crisis. If the satellite had been slowed down sufficiently, the chances were good. If not, it was all over; the great experiment would have failed and Yourko Andropov would be dead by incineration. Yumashev could not imagine why he had wanted to look. He took a cigarette from his overall pocket and lit it.

He waited.

Dvinski appeared in the open doorway of the computer room. "So far so good, Feodor," Dvinski shouted. "He is now entering atmosphere and we have detected no sign of overheating."

"Thank you!" Yumashev shouted. He turned and walked away towards a helicopter standing nearby, its engine already roaring.

Yourko was still unconscious when they took him out of the satellite. He had chosen to take the anaesthetic. He came around in the helicopter that was taking him back to the experimental station. Yumashev was with him.

"Feodor!" Yourko's hand went out. Yumashev took it, smiling. At the same time he looked, narrowly and professionally, at the man on the stretcher. There were signs of weakness, but the eyes were bright—very bright. No insanity. Yumashev knew it, he was sure of it—he could feel insanity, smell it, detect it at a distance. His heart glowed.

"Feodor," Yourko said again, low-voiced but with urgency. "Listen! Something happened. I was looking at the stars. I began to understand. Are you listening?"

"Yes, but I think you should not talk now."

"I must talk. I . . . It is very difficult to explain. I began to understand and I began to see, Feodor. I . . . I saw a unity." Yourko closed his eyes. He was sweating. Yumashev frowned. "It is all a unity," Yourko went on. "It is a being, Feodor. Everything fits. Everything conforms. All the parts work together. I saw that, Feodor. It was very clear. There was no doubt; there was not even room for doubt. Am I speaking intelligently?"

"Yes, Yourko."

"And I understand much—things that I have never even

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thought about before. I understand that neither time nor distance have their proper meaning —not in our minds. Have you ever thought of that?"

"No, Yourko," Yumashev said. "Won't you try to relax? It would be better for you to sleep now."

"Please," Yourko's voice was pleading. "Please listen, Feodor. Everything has its own time—can you understand that? Everything has its own time and its own space. For an electron its nucleus is distant; for us the sun is distant. Do you see what I mean? Can you see the importance of that?"

"No," Yumashev said gently. "There is time for everything, Yourko. You are seeing stars and I am seeing a man exhausted by a fantastic experience. Now, since you will not obey me, I am going to give you an injection."

"Feodor!" Yourko shouted. "Feodor, try! Please try to understand. Listen! I saw the universe, Feodor —as a whole, as an entity. It is a being—a living being! Everything is ordered. Everything has its place. We have our place. Don't you understand? I was seeing all, Feodor, all! I was beginning to understand what we, humanity, are here for. That's why I asked not to be brought down . . ."

The needle went in. Yumashev withdrew it from Yourko's arm and rolled back the blanket. "There," he said gently. "Now you will sleep, Yourko. It is better."

Yourko said nothing. He turned his head away from his friend and closed his eyes.

It was morning. Yourko was sitting up in bed. The room was air-conditioned and pleasantly cool—a hero's room, a room for a Hero of the Soviet Union. Through the window he could look out over an endless expanse of hostile, sun-parched Turkmani desert. He liked it better than a view of the satellite's instruments. He had a tray across his knees and he was eating boiled eggs out of a bowl.

Yumashev came in. "*Zdrasvuyté*, Yourko."

"*Zdrasvuyté*, Feodor."

"How are you feeling?"

"Good. I slept for twelve hours." Yourko smiled.

Yumashev sat down, folding his long body like the leg of a cricket. "Well," he said, "then I imagine you will be ready to tell. Start from the beginning."

Yourko frowned, laying down his spoon. He picked up his coffee cup and looked down into it. He might have been trying to read a fortune.

Yumashev said, "What was it that you were telling me in the helicopter last night? I tried to listen, but I could not understand."

"Have you ever tried to remember a dream which you knew to be of the greatest importance," Yourko asked, "but which, how-

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ever hard you tried, faded—faded irrevocably, piece by piece, until nothing remained but the knowledge that you had dreamed?"

Yumashev nodded.

"That is what I am doing now."

"But," Yumashev said, "I don't understand. This was not a dream, was it? You were not telling me of a dream, last night?"

"No. No, it was not a dream." Yourko put down his coffee cup. "Last night, Feodor, in the satellite, everything was clear—crystalline. I was not dreaming. If you like, I was having visions, but I was awake. I think I shall never be so much awake again. I seemed to see the universe, instantaneously, as an entirety . . . I would almost say solidly. Anyway, as a pattern. I . . ." Yourko stopped. He shook his head. "No, Feodor, I cannot explain."

"I think you are doing very well."

"No." Yourko shook his head again, more definitely, more decisively.

Yumashev was silent. Presently, diffidently — and his manner of speech was not normally diffident—he said, "I should have tried harder to listen last night, Yourko. I see now that you were right. You had something to say that would not keep. I am sorry I gave you that injection."

Yourko shrugged and smiled. "I don't think it made much difference," he said. "I don't think this can be told in words; that is perhaps the great secret and mystery of it."

Yumashev nodded. "That could be so," he said.

"Do you think I was a little mad?" Yourko asked. "Do you think that my visions were hallucinations, Feodor, and meaningless?"

Yumashev shook his head. "No, Yourko."

"Neither do I," Yourko said. "I am not a man for hallucinations—or for visions, for that matter. I am not even much of a thinker."

Yumashev rose to his feet. "You have made me wonder if I should volunteer to go with the next satellite, Yourko," he said. He was smiling, but there was no sarcasm in his smile, nor mockery, unless it was directed at himself. "I'll leave you alone now—to try to remember, perhaps. I have told the others that they can have their questions ready for midday. Will that suit you?"

Yourko nodded. "Thank you, Feodor."

The psychiatrist left the room.

"Friends," Neresenko was saying at a high-level meeting a few days later, "I think it can safely be said that we have the basic problems of space travel defeated. Comrade Major Andropov suffered considerably during his journey in 1959 Gamma. Among other things, he has told us that the

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sense of restlessness became almost intolerable, and that it was almost impossible to fight off the mental lethargy produced by the conditions in the satellite. He has suggested that there may be undiscovered reasons for this. However, it is my opinion that the obvious reasons are the right reasons. I believe that he suffered from claustrophobia and the inability to move, exaggerated by insecurity, loneliness and the strangeness of his surroundings. I think that we shall obtain quite different results when we send men into space in twos and threes, and when rocket development has permitted us to enlarge their living quarters." Neresenko glanced round the room, taking in the expressions on the faces of his listeners, and then, apparently satisfied, he looked down at his notes.

"Comrade Major Andropov," he went on, "also reports that he suffered from delusions and hallucinations during the latter part of his flight. This would be a disturbing matter did it not appear that the symptoms were produced when he was already weakened by his sufferings and after he had spent an overlong period staring out into the heavens." Neresenko smiled. "It may emerge, comrades, that star-gazing is bad for space-fliers. If it does, I suggest that we shall have a simple remedy. We shall only have to deny space crews access to the viewing ports, or not provide viewing ports at all, and the trouble will probably be cured. Radar can do almost everything that the human eye can do, and many things it can do better . . ."

At the far end of the table, Feodor Yumashev, there more out of courtesy than because he was needed, stared down at the table top. He was remembering Yourko's eyes in the helicopter, and his voice, and the flavor and strangeness of the things that he had been trying to say and that he, Yumashev, had not even troubled to listen to. Why, Yumashev found himself thinking as Neresenko rumbled on, were they trying to get out into space at all? For knowledge, for minerals, for military advantage, in order to examine the structure of uninhabited planets . . . and so on and so on? Yumashev felt suddenly doubtful. Yourko's talk had given him a glimpse of a different purpose, one that none of them had known of . . .

Neresenko had finished. A round of clapping was sounding. Yumashev did not clap. Instead he scowled at the Controller. It had suddenly occurred to him that Neresenko, and all who thought like Neresenko, could be the Enemy.

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Air Space Violated

The rights of sovran states extend
In three-dimensional embrace
From side to side, from end to end
And vertically into space.

Unseen, unshakable and sheer
Their insubstantial bournes arise,
Drawn from the centre of the sphere
And out into the endless skies:

From which a larger image falls
On space, a macrocosm caught
And thrown on heaven's receding walls
By radiating lines of thought,

Till the least sovran state projects
A self grown infinitely great,
Which, still expanding, still respects
The confines of its neighbor state.

So out through endless time extend
Vast empires of receding worth,
Whose moving amplitudes subtend
Fixed angles at the core of earth.

And worlds incalculably great,
Themselves not knowing space or speed,
Move through and, moving, violate
The frontiers of terrestrial greed.

P. M. HUBBARD

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*It's astonishing what a mere suffix will do for a personality. Call a woman catty, and you call her something small-minded, vicious, gossipy, and, on the whole, a nasty, unpleasant female. But call her cat-*like—*and you evoke an image of languid, graceful stretching, of a rippling and most attractive body, of an independent and thoroughly proud spirit. Men and women despise the one, and stare in damp-eyed admiration at the other. Here is the story of a girl who was loaned the attributes and talents of a cat. The reader will please supply his own suffix.*

Bewitched

by MICHAEL FESSIER

JULIE HATTON STOOD AT THE WINDOW of the library in her mother's gracious mansion on the banks of the Hudson near Weehawken and watched her cousin, Diane, playing tennis wth George Parker. It was late in the year for tennis, but the day was a fine one. Julie clasped her hands together and lifted her blond head heavenward, and her childishly beautiful face was a picture of piety as she murmured, "Please, dear Lord, let her fall flat on her bumpty."

But the tall, dark-haired Diane did not fall on anything. Instead she leaped about the court like a gazelle, making her tall, bronzed opponent fight hard for every point. Mrs. Hatton, a plump little woman with bright blue eyes, came up to the window and stood beside Julie, studying the woebegone look on her daughter's face.

"Why aren't you out there playing, dear?" she asked.

"In the first place," said Julie disconsolately, "I play a perfectly dreadful game. In the second place, Diane would do something horrible to me, like tripping me or accidentally bonking me with a tennis racket."

"Why don't you bonk her right back?" asked Mrs. Hatton.

"I'd probably botch it," said Julie glumly. "I'd probably miss her and hit myself in the brisket and George'd laugh at me. It isn't just the bonking, Mother. It's what Diane's been doing to me ever

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since we were children. She can make me feel clumsy from a standing start. All she has to do is look at me and I sprout extra thumbs and my two left feet grow three sizes larger."

Julie watched wistfully as a tawny cat flashed across the tennis court, leaped over the net, sneaked up the trunk of a tree and disappeared in the foliage.

"I wish," she said, "that I could handle my body like that."

"There's nothing wrong with your body," sniffed Mrs. Hatton, "and I imagine that, if the chips were down, you could handle it as well as the next one. What you need is that cat's disposition; not her physique. I just fed her and she's got a belly full of food. So what do you think she's doing up that tree? Admiring the scenery? I should say not. She's trying to kill a bird that she doesn't want and can't use for food—just for the sheer viciousness of it. That's what Diane's got that you haven't got."

"You mean that's good?" asked Julie.

"You could use some of it," said her mother. "Diane couldn't have more boy friends of her own if she were a stowaway on a submarine and yet when we trap an eligible male to this place as a house guest, she invites herself over and puts the snatch on him—just out of pure avarice."

"I know it," said Julie dolefully, "but I didn't care about the others. The only one I care about is George. I want to wash his back for the rest of his life."

"Well, you aren't getting anywhere just standing at the window mooning at him," said Mrs. Hatton. "Go out there and do something. Attract his attention."

"How?" asked Julie. I'll bet if I were to take all my clothes off and set my hair afire he wouldn't give me a second look."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Hatton, shoving Julie towards the door. "Men'll run miles to see a fire."

Julie wandered out to that part of the tennis court inhabited by George Parker and stared adoringly at him. She wanted desperately for him to notice her and to speak to her, and yet she was afraid that he would. When men spoke to Julie she became inarticulate and felt clumsy and foolish, or, as Diane put it, "If a man says hello to Julie, she's stuck for an answer."

Finally enough balls went past George to make it necessary for him to retrieve them before the game could go on. He was stooping over picking them up when he bumped into Julie, who stood pressed against the backstop.

"Oh, I'm sorry," he said, straightening up. "I didn't see you, Julie."

Julie was about to say, "You never do," when she became suddenly emboldened and she said,

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"There's no need for you to chase these balls, George. I'll stay here and when they go by you I'll pick 'em up, and then when you need 'em I'll have 'em for you."

George stared curiously at Julie, noticed the promise of voluptuousness in her soft body, the half-veiled invitation in her eyes. Then, as usual, Julie began to shrink within herself, the promise of voluptuousness was dispelled, the invitation was withdrawn and Julie stood before him an awkward, embarrassed child.

"Well," said George uncomfortably, "I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble, Julie."

"And neither would I," said Diane as she came walking up to them, smiling with spurious friendliness at her cousin. "Naturally we wouldn't want you shagging balls for us, but if you want to get into the game, why don't you play George a couple of sets?" She extended her racket toward Julie. "Go ahead, darling," she said, "and, for Heaven's sakes, get rid of that absurd self-consciousness of yours, will you? Even if you do fall down a couple of times, George won't laugh at you." She smiled up at George. "Will you, George?"

"I sure wouldn't," said George and he gave Diane a look that, for a moment, was sharply disapproving.

Julie didn't noice that momentary look of disapproval. Knowing what Diane's diabolical power of suggestion would do to her in case she foolishly attempted to play tennis with George, she shrank from the proffered racket, then turned and walked awkwardly away, as usual leaving the field to her cousin.

She was wandering disconsolately in the garden when she noticed a gopher caught in a trap. The small creature gazed up at her with such poignantly pleading eyes that her heart went out to it.

"Oh, you poor little thing," said Julie.

She released the creature from the trap and, instead of darting back into its hole, it grew larger and larger and finally assumed the form and character of an elderly, white-haired woman who gazed at Julie out of grateful eyes.

"Heavens!" gasped Julie. "I thought you were a gopher."

"I was," said the elderly woman. "It's a good enough life if it weren't for the gardeners and the traps." Then she shrugged her shoulders. "Still and all," she said, "it's no worse than it was in the days of the Puritans. I got sick and tired of being burned whenever the populace was bored and didn't have anything to do. I tell you those were rugged days for a witch."

"Do you know," said Julie, vastly impressed, "that you're the very first witch I've ever met."

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"I dare say," said the witch diffidently. "I'm a good witch, though. Name's Brock. H. K. Brock."

"I'm most awfully glad to know you, Mrs. Brock," said Julie.

"It's really *Miss*," said the witch, "but let it go. Hiram Brock was a wood carver friend of mine near Plymouth Rock. It was perfectly platonic, but, inasmuch as I underwent my fifth and last incineration on account of the affair I kept his name. You may call me Mrs. Brock, if you wish."

"Thank you kindly," said Julie.

"You're a very well-spoken and well-behaved lass for this day and age," said Mrs. Brock approvingly. Then she peered closely at Julie. "You seem sorely upset," she said. "What's the trouble, dear?"

Julie told Mrs. Brock all her troubles, especially those concerning Diane and George.

"I know how it is," said Mrs. Brock sympathetically. "Hiram had eyes only for a blond choir singer and he couldn't see me for a bunch of scuppernong grapes until I changed myself into a cat and ran the simpering little hussy out of town."

"Oh, my," said Julie, remembering her mother's remark about the tawny cat, "I wish I could do that."

"Be careful," warned Mrs. Brock. "Do you really?"

"Well," said Julie, after some thought, "I wouldn't want to be a really and truly cat; not one with a long tail and whiskers—just *sort* of a cat, with a cat's courage so's I wouldn't be afraid of Diane any more and I could fight her with her own weapons."

"My, my," said Mrs. Brock dubiously. "That's quite an order. I've never changed anyone into a *sort* of an animal before. I may be playing fast and loose with the laws of necromancy, but I'll try." She looked Julie in the eyes and muttered something under her breath. "I don't know just how it'll work out," she commented. "I'm not sure just what kind of a creature you'll be or for how long. You may fluctuate occasionally. I mean you may be one thing one minute and something else the next and there's no telling just when the changes will take place."

"I'll risk it," said Julie courageously. "When are you going to do whatever you're going to do?"

"It's already done," said Mrs. Brock.

"But," said Julie, "I don't feel a single bit different."

"Don't worry," said Mrs. Brock. "You will."

And she disappeared.

Julie wandered back toward the house and it occurred to her that she must have been daydreaming. It was utterly, preposterously, impossible that she should have just recently been talking to a gopher by the name of H. K. Brock. She walked back to the tennis court

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and watched a while as George fought to hold his own with Diane.

"What's the matter, George?" said Julie suddenly and much to her own amazement. "Is old knobby-knees giving you trouble? Here, hand me the bat and I'll show you how it's done."

While George stared at her, open-mouthed, she walked up to him, took the racket and two tennis balls from his hand and smacked a screaming service ace past the thunderstruck Diane. To prove that the first serve was no fluke Julie served another ace and then proceeded to give Diane a merciless beating. Finally Diane mendaciously claimed a sprained ankle and tottered off the court.

Then, all at once, Julie found herself alone with George and he was standing tall and bronzed before her staring down at her with a friendly grin and a light of admiration in his eyes.

"Julie," he said in a voice that thrilled Julie to the core of her being, "I just can't believe it."

And Julie found that she could not believe it either. She couldn't believe that she had defeated her cousin at tennis nor that she had had the effrontery to speak familiarly, almost impudently, to George Parker. Suddenly inarticulate, she dropped the tennis racket, placed her hand over her mouth and hurried for the house. Two nondescript cats appeared from the shrubbery and solemnly followed Julie. They would have gone into the house with her had she not shut the door in their faces.

That night Julie appeared just in time for dinner. She was in a subdued mood until the fish course was served.

"Goody!" she exclaimed. "Fish! Just what a growing girl needs to put meat on her bones."

She picked a broiled trout up in her hands and began to nibble at it delicately as her mother and George and Diane stared.

"For Pete's sake," snapped Diane, "where are your manners?"

"When fish is on the menu," said Julie complacently, "manners are superfluous. Of course," she went on, eying the trout critically, "this here fish has had the bejeebers cooked out of it. I prefer my fish raw."

"You mean rare," said George, who had been staring hard at Julie.

"I mean raw, Georgie," said Julie. "You'd be surprised at what vitamins you lose when you cook a fish. If you want to get the full food value and flavor out of a trout, eat him while he's still alive and screaming."

"Gracious!" said Mrs. Hatton. "We learn something new every day, don't we?"

"Don't pay any attention to her," said Diane, who did not like

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the way George had been looking at Julie. "She's just showing off and, I might add, in a very disgusting manner."

"And as for you, Diane," said Julie, "if you'd eat more fish, either raw or cooked, you would not have such knobby knees. Which," she went on maliciously, "is one defect of yours that the vulcanizing industry can't cover up."

Taken off balance by this new frontal attack and again feeling a strange fear of her cousin, Diane lost control of her temper.

"I refuse to eat another bite at this table," she said furiously. She rose and looked at George. "Come on, George," she commanded, "it's time we dressed for the Bascombe party."

"I didn't know the Bascombes were having a party," said George, staring with rapt fascination at Julie.

"Well, you do now," said Diane.

George hesitated for a moment and then, from force of habit, he rose and followed Diane out of the room, darting quick backward looks at Julie as he made his exit. Mrs. Hatton was beaming at her daughter.

"Nice going," she said, "but whatever on earth has got into you, child?"

Julie drank a glass of milk, licked her lips with a delicate pink tongue, then stretched and yawned languorously.

"Nothing, Mother," she said. "I'm just sleepy."

George drove Diane home that night and, as he was helping her out of the car, he glanced up and stared unbelievingly at what he saw. There, precariously perched on the peak of the roof and limned by the moon, was a girl. The girl saw George at the same time and she waved at him.

"Come on up," came Julie's voice. "The moon's fine."

"How on earth did you get up there?" shouted George.

"I climbed the trellis, of course," replied Julie. "Hurry, George, the moon won't last forever."

George glanced at the trellis and shuddered at its fragile, unreliable appearance. Then he looked around and spotted a tall ladder leaning against a tree.

"Don't you dare," hissed Diane, guessing his intentions. "Can't you see that she's only wearing a nightgown?"

"I don't care what she's wearing," said George with determination. "She's in danger. She might fall off there at any moment and break her neck."

"Any girl that'd wear such a *transparent* nightgown deserves to break her neck," said Diane. "George, I forbid you."

George ignored her. He carried the ladder to the house, leaned it against the roof and started to climb. Diane stalked away.

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Julie watched with composure, occasionally offering a bit of advice, as George climbed the ladder and cautiously made his way up the steep slant of the roof to her side.

"The trellis would have been much quicker," she told him.

"Never mind that," said George severely. "What are you doing up here on the roof?"

"Why, I'm just looking at the moon," said Julie innocently. "What's wrong with that? For Heaven's sakes, what's biting you, Georgie? Can't a girl sit on a roof and watch the moon without being criticized?"

"A girl," said George, "can watch the moon from the ground. And, incidentally, she doesn't have to wear a nightgown for the purpose, either."

"Oh, the nightgown," said Julie indifferently. "Does it bother you, George? Shall I take it off?"

"Heaven forbid!" said George, panic-stricken. "Things are bad enough as they are. Come on, Julie, let me help you down."

"When I decide to get down, I won't need any help," said Julie. "But what's your hurry, Georgie? It's just the shank of the evening. Sit and talk to me."

"About what?" asked George.

"About you, for instance," said Julie. "Or, to be more specific, about your back. You've got a very presentable back, Georgie. Did you know that I've often longed to scrub your back, Georgie?"

"No, I didn't," said George nervously.

"Have you," said Julie, sidling closer to him, "ever wanted to scrub my back?"

"The notion of scrubbing your back," said George, "has never occurred to me."

"Now that it has," asked Julie, "doesn't it appeal to you? Don't be bashful, Georgie. Come right out like a man and admit you'd like to scrub my back."

"I would not," said George vehemently. "I mean I refuse to get involved in the discussion. This is neither the time nor place to discuss your back."

"All right, then," said Julie agreeably and she edged even closer to George. "We won't discuss it. Scratch my back, will you, Georgie. I'd like awfully for you to."

Without thinking, George started gently stroking Julie's back; her flesh was soft and warm beneath the flimsy nightgown. She placed her head on his shoulder.

"That feels good," she said dreamily. "I could almost purr."

"Really?" said George. Then he pulled away from her and stared at her, aghast. "You *are* purring," he said unbelievingly.

"That's right," said Julie sleepily. "I am, aren't I?"

Again she leaned against his shoulder and sighed with content-

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ment. George stared down at her; perhaps it was a trick of the moonlight, but her ears seemed, ever so slightly, pointed and tufted delicately with blond hair, and her eyes seemed just a bit slanted. The purring, however, was no trick of the moonlight. It was a low, throbbing, melodious sound that made George's spine tingle and caused his blood to race intoxicatingly through his veins.

George sensed his danger; but it was a delicious danger, and he was too immersed in beauty, too drunk with desire to be afraid. He didn't understand what her being on the rooftop had to do with it and he didn't try to explain the purring, but he knew that suddenly Julie had ceased to be a child and was now a whole woman and he had to have her for the rest of his life.

"I love you," he murmured.

"Oh, do you, darling?" gasped Julie, and the purring sound grew soft.

Then George was conscious of a sharp pain in his right ear and he realized that Julie had bitten him. She was facing him, her teeth white in the moonlight and her eyes glowing with greenish fire.

"That," she said ominously, "is what you get for horsing around with Diane."

"It was you I always loved," said George defensively as he massaged his wounded ear, "but I didn't realize it. I—"

But Julie wasn't listening to him. She was staring at something in the distance.

"Holy smokel" she exclaimed. "Look at that, will you?"

"Look at what?" asked George, slowly coming out of his delicious daze.

"At that cat with the whopping big fishbone," said Julie excitedly.

A large piebald tomcat was coming toward them across the rooftop. Upon seeing the two human intruders, he paused, dropped the fishbone he carried in his mouth, crouched over the treasure and snarled defiantly.

"What's so exciting about a cat with a fishbone?" George asked Julie.

"What's so exciting about it?" demanded Julie. "Why, I want it, of course, and if you were half a man, Georgie, you'd get it for me."

This shocked George back to a normal state of mind.

"I refuse," he said indignantly, "to become involved with a cat in a brawl over a fishbone."

"Then I will," said Julie with determination. "And don't be squeamish over that cat's property rights. Up here, it's the law of the jungle."

Before George could restrain her, Julie rose to her feet and started stealthily toward the tomcat. The cat snarled ferociously in warning and, when that did not

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dissuade Julie, he picked up the fishbone and scurried back into the shadows. Running with incredible swiftness and assurance, Julie followed her quarry out of sight. There was a brief, snarling argument and presently Julie appeared, strutting triumphantly over the rooftop, holding the fishbone.

"He put up a game fight," she said proudly, "but he was no match for me."

"And now that you stole the fishbone from the cat," said George, "what are you going to do with it?"

Julie sat down and stared dubiously at the fishbone. Suddenly she made a face and threw it away from her. Then she shivered and gazed dubiously at George.

"Is that you, George?" she asked. She stared about her and then looked back to George. "What are we doing up on the roof, George?" she asked petulantly. "I don't know how you did it, but I don't think it's very nice of you to bring me up here, George. Don't you realize that you could kill a girl that way? I'm afraid that I'll never be able to trust you again as long as I live, George."

"But you climbed up here yourself," said George incredulously, "by way of the trellis. Don't you remember?"

"Of course not," said Julie. "How could I ever have climbed up the trellis? I'm a coward."

As he stared at Julie, George was convinced that the pointed ears and the slanted eyes had, after all, only been a trick of the moonlight. Julie was the same as always, except that she was more frightened than usual.

"I think you've been sick," said George gently. "Come on, I'll help you down."

Slowly and carefully, George led Julie down the ladder into the house and to her room. He closed the door after her and then went down to the sitting room to brood over the night's adventure. Mrs. Hatton came into the room attired in a kimono. "What are you doing up so late, George?" she asked. "And what was all that howling and yelling and spitting on the roof?"

"That," said George, turning a haggard face to her, "was Julie."

"What on earth was Julie doing on the roof?" asked Mrs. Hatton.

"She was fighting a cat over a fishbone," said George.

"Heavens!" gasped Mrs. Hatton. "Did she get it?"

"She did," said George.

"Well, what do you know?" said Mrs. Hatton. Then she thought for a while. "What did Julie want with a fishbone?"

"I don't know," said George. "There's something mighty peculiar about Julie, Mrs. Hatton. I don't know how to explain it, but,

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for a while up there, your daughter seemed to have certain characteristics of a cat."

"Really?" asked Mrs. Hatton interestedly. "What kind of a cat?"

"What difference does it make?" demanded George irritably.

"Well, she's *my* daughter, isn't she?" demanded Mrs. Hatton defensively.

Suddenly there was a terrified scream from the vicinity of Diane's room and then a great hissing and meowing and caterwauling and a swelling sound as if all the cats in creation were joining in one mighty cacophony. George and Mrs. Hatton rushed through the living room and to the stairway. Diane's door burst open and, attired in a fur coat thrown over her pajamas, the dark-haired girl came running down the stairs, followed by a countless horde of cats, seemingly demented and filled with a lust for blood.

"Diane, darling," said Mrs. Hatton calmly as Diane came flying toward her, "what on earth were you doing with all those cats in your room?"

Diane leaped upon a chair and the cats all gathered around her, spitting and growling and making unintelligible, but nonetheless gruesome threats.

"Cats!" she gasped. "I woke up and there were hundreds of them, thousands of them in my room. The window was open and thousands more were coming in. They were all over the bed, on the dresser, on the mantel – everywhere—staring at me. And then I screamed and they screamed and then one of them—a great big one, the largest cat I've ever seen —bit me." She paused and touched a reddened spot on her throat. "There's something hellishly peculiar going on around here, Aunt Alice," she said.

"How so?" asked Mrs. Hatton.

"Because," said Diane, "that big cat that bit me looked strangely like Julie."

"What's all the ruckus?" came Julie's voice.

They all looked up to see Julie standing in her nightgown at the head of the stairs. "Did you," asked Mrs. Hatton mildly, "bite your cousin Diane on the neck?"

"Why, how absurd," said Julie, starting down the stairs. "Whatever gave you that idea?"

"Don't let her come close to me," cried Diane, almost hysterically. "She intends to kill me." She turned beseechingly to George. "George," she said, "I can't spend another minute in this house. I'm going home. Will you drive me there, darling?"

George tossed her some keys.

"I think," he said, "that I'd better stick around."

"I think," said Diane venomously, "that you're in cahoots with Julie and I'll get you both for it. I'll—"

The cats set up a more blood-

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thirsty yowling and a few of them stood on tiptoe and clawed at Diane's legs. She shrieked, leaped from the chair, sped across the living room and out the door. The animals followed her and soon there was the sound of a car speeding down the driveway trailed by a chorus of frustrated catcalls.

"Julie," said Mrs. Hatton reprovingly as her daughter reached the landing, "did you sick those cats onto your cousin Diane?"

"I might have," said Julie.

"How did you manage to coax so many of them into the room?" asked Mrs. Hatton. "I never saw so many cats in all my born days."

"I don't remember exactly," said Julie, "but it might have had something to do with H. K. Brock."

"Who," asked George, "is H. K. Brock?"

"A witch," said Julie simply.

"A witch?" said Mrs. Hatton. "I *knew* there was some reasonable explanation for all this."

Then Julie told them the story of her experience with H. K. Brock. After she finished her story there was a long silence. Finally George shifted his feet, cleared his throat and spoke.

"I hate to admit it," he said, "but it all seems to make sense. You must have been bewitched, Julie, or else you wouldn't have bitten me on the ear up there."

"Did I?" asked Julie, blushing demurely. "Did I bite your ear, George?"

"You sure did," said George and then it seemed that the spell of the rooftop hadn't entirely left him. "And," he went on recklessly, "that sort of stuff's got to stop if we're to be married."

"Did you say married?" gasped Julie. "Is that what you said, George?"

"Providing," said George sternly, "that you go dig up that witch and call this whole absurd deal off."

"Must I?" wailed Julie. "From what I remember, it all seemed so strange and wonderful and exhilarating and I felt so brave and free and—"

"I refuse to marry a girl who chases stray tomcats over the rooftops," said George firmly.

"Well," said Julie docilely, "in that case, I guess I'll just have to go have a talk wih H. K. Brock."

The next morning George and Mrs. Hatton watched as Julie walked across the lawn in quest of H. K. Brock. She seemed an inch taller as she strode lithely away from them, her steps so light that they hardly appeared to bend a blade of grass; her voluptuous body was a symphony of curves, controlled and in motion. George felt a catch in his throat.

"Are you sure," inquired Mrs. Hatton, "that you aren't making a mistake?"

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George wavered for a moment, felt an impulse to call Julie back to his arms; and then he remembered the episode of the fishbone.

"No," he said emphatically.

Julie went on to the spot where she had last seen H. K. Brock, and the good witch appeared and listened attentively to what Julie had to say.

"Men," said H. K. Brock crossly after Julie had concluded her story, "never know what they want or when they're well off!" Then she shrugged. "All right," she went on, "if he thinks his ideas are better than mine, I'll just let him have his way."

Then she mumbled a few words and disappeared. As Julie turned away she caught her foot in a gopher hole and fell flat on her face. . . .

Three weeks later, George stood wih Julie at the altar and, in response to a question which rolled from the preacher's lips like so many loaded dice, he answered, "I do." Then because it was expected of him he took an unresponsive, frightened child-woman in his arms and, after a perfunctory kiss, his eyes wandered over the wedding guests, many of whom were filing down the aisle after what they considered a rather uninspired performance.

Finally George spotted Diane standing to one side of the church. She was tall and vibrantly beautiful and her look was both an invitation and a promise and George disconsolately decided that he had bartered an available actuality for the memory of an illusion. As the thought formed in his mind, an elderly, white-haired woman materialized at the altar, took Julie's hands as if to congratulate her and mumbled a few words.

George was not conscious of the departure of the strange woman. Too many other things were happening. First he felt a stabbing pain in his left ear and then he watched, stupefied, as Julie cleared the altar rail in one graceful bound, slapped Diane's face and then left the church, running swiftly and lightly over the tops of the pews.

After searching the town unavailingly for his missing bride, George made his way to the honeymoon cottage late that night. As he entered the yard he looked up and saw Julie, attired in a diaphanous nightgown, sitting on the peak of the roof.

"Hi, Georgie," she called gaily. "Come on up and take a gander at the moon. I wouldn't be surprised but what it'll give you all sorts of ideas . . ."

George, attired in a dressing gown, sat on the bed and watched as the first rays of a dawning sun fell on the adorable features of his sleeping bride. There was a contented smile on her lips and from

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them issued an ever so soft purring sound.

"At least," George told himself, "her ears definitely are not pointed." Then he yawned and lay down beside Julie.

"I suppose," he mused, "that there is a little cat in the best of women and they'll all snatch fishbones from life in one way or another, but they'll make up for biting and scratching when they're displeased, by purring when they're happy and a man'd be a fool to want it otherwise—"

Then he remembered the strange, elderly woman who had appeared in the church and he addressed his last waking thought to her.

"But, please, H. K. Brock," he murmured, "don't overdo it."

Through Time and Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: IX

In 3588, the space liner *Asimov Maru* was forced down on a seemingly unknown planet. Her interstellar transmitters were wrecked and her supplies were all ruined.

Her captain sought out Ferdinand Feghoot, who luckily was one of the passengers. "*Please* help us," he begged.

For a moment, Feghoot regarded the landscape. Then, "Bring baskets and a big iron griddle," he ordered. "Follow me!"

They obeyed. For hours, they trudged over burning sand and dry cactus. Finally, when they were close to despair, he pointed at an advancing wall of brown fog.

"I *thought* so!" he cried. "This planet is called *Even Greater L.A.* It is famous for its edible smog, which tastes just like mushrooms. Light a big fire! Heat up the griddle!" Beckoning to the men with the baskets, he drew his machete.

Soon the men were back with succulent chunks of the edible smog, and these he immediately threw on the fire. They jiggled and twitched; shrill cries seemed to come from them.

"Mr. Feghoot!" the captain exclaimed. "That isn't just smog. Th-the inhabitants seem to be in it!"

"Think nothing of it," laughed Ferdinand Feghoot. "It's all mist to my grill."

GRENDEL BRIARTON

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SCIENCE

F&SF announces delightedly that it has managed to retain the rare insight, genial personality, and scientific erudition of the good Dr. Isaac Asimov, and that the intriguing results of his restless curiosity about physical phenomena and related matters will appear regularly in this new column.

In this issue, Dr. Asimov's column forms Part One of a rare kind of two-part feature. . . . It is not unusual for science fiction writers to take their cues from science fact articles—but in this case, A. Bertram Chandler's "Critical Angle" (on page 39) came in from a far corner of the world in the same mail that brought us this article from Boston. And so, by happy coincidence, we bring you first the facts on a little publicized subject, and then . . . a little more.

THE DUST OF AGES

by ISAAC ASIMOV

ONE OF THE DISHEARTENING DISCOVERIES a housewife makes early in housewifery (my hard-working wife tells me) concerns the unbeatability of dust. No matter how clean a house is kept and how little activity is allowed within it and how thoroughly children and other filthy creatures are barred from the premises, a fine layer of dust coats everything as soon as you turn your back.

The atmosphere of Earth, particularly in cities, is just plain dusty; and a good thing, too, or there would be no blue skies and no softening of shadows.

And space, particularly within solar systems, is also dusty. It is loaded with individual atoms and with conglomerates of atoms. Many of the conglomerates range up to pin-head size or so; the so-called "micro-meteors" which, at the velocities at which they move,

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are large enough to do damage to a space-vessel. (One of the functions of the artificial satellite is to measure the quantity of such micro-meteors in circumterrestrial space.)

Their numbers, we hope, will not be high enough to impede space-travel, but they are high. The Earth sweeps up billions of them each day. They burn in the upper reaches of the atmosphere through friction-generated heat and never get within sixty miles of the Earth's surface. (The occasional large meteors that weigh pounds or tons are another story.) However, what is meant by "burn"?

In burning, the atoms composing the micro-meteors don't disappear, they merely vaporize with heat and then this vapor condenses to form an extremely fine dust. Slowly, this dust settles to Earth.

The most recent measurements of the atmosphere's meteoric dust (as far as I know) were reported by Hans Petterson in the February 1, 1958, issue of the British scientific journal, *Nature*. He travelled some two miles above sea-level on the slopes of Mauna Loa in Hawaii (and another mountain on Kaui) and sieved the air, separating out the fine dust, weighing it and analyzing it. At a two-mile height in the middle of the Pacific Ocean one can expect the air to be pretty free of terrestrial dust. Furthermore, Petterson paid particular attention to the cobalt content of the dust, since meteor dust is high in cobalt whereas Earthly dust is low in it.

He found 14.3 micrograms (about one two-millionth of an ounce) of cobalt in the dust filtered out of one thousand cubic meters of air. In meteors, some 2.5 percent of the atoms are cobalt so Petterson calculated that the total quantity of dust of meteor origin in the atmosphere, up to a height of 60 miles, amounts to 28,600,000 *tons*.

This dust isn't just sitting there. Slowly, it is settling to Earth while new dust is being added by the continuous entry of new micro-meters into the atmosphere. If the 28,600,000 tons is a steady figure, the same amount is being added each year as is settling out, but how much is that?

Petterson went back to data concerning the 1883 explosion of the Krakatoa volcano in the East Indies when tremendous quantities of the very finest dust were liberated into the upper atmosphere and sunsets were extra beautiful all over the world. Pretty nearly all that dust had settled back to Earth after two years. If this two-year-settling figure holds for meteor dust, too, then half the total—14,300,000 tons of such dust—settles to Earth each year and 14,300,000 tons of

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new dust must enter the atmosphere.

At this point, Petterson ends his calculation and I begin mine—and the speculations that result concern our industrial civilization and the problem of landing on the Moon.

Naturally, 14,300,000 tons of dust per year seems like a large figure and the thought, to any housewife, would be a sobering one. However spread out over the Earth it's not so bad. The Earth has a surface area of about 197,000,000 square miles so the annual dust-fall per square mile is only about 145 pounds, which is nothing compared to the dust generated by the coal and oil we burn.

If we consider meteor dust to be mostly iron, 145 pounds is equivalent to 510 cubic inches (a cube eight inches on each side). Since a square mile contains about 4,000,000,000 square inches, a year's accumulation of dust spread out evenly over the square mile (or over the Earth generally, as a matter of fact) would pile up a dust layer about 0.00000013 inches thick. That's a trifle over a ten-millionth of an inch and even my wife wouldn't worry about that.

Of course, this goes on year after year and the Earth has been in existence as a solid body for a good long time; for perhaps as long as 5,000,000,000 years. If, through all that time, meteor dust had settled to Earth at the same rate it does today, then by now, if it were undisturbed, it would form a layer 54 feet thick over all of Earth.

It does *not* remain undisturbed, however. It falls in the ocean. It is blown about. It is rained on. It is tramped underfoot. Leaves fall on it.

And yet, this dust never disappears and it could be of the greatest importance to us. In comparison to the mass of the Earth, the 70,000,000,000,000,000 tons of dust collected in Earth's history is very little. It is only a hundred thousandth of the Earth's mass. *But*—the dust is mostly iron, and that makes it rather special.

The Earth, you see, consists of two layers, a central core of iron and materials soluble in it and an outer crust of silicates and materials soluble in it. This, presumably, dates back to the time when Earth was liquid and the two mutually immiscible liquids settled out, the dense one below and the lighter one above. In that case, though, why is there so much iron found in the Earth's crust among the silicates. Iron is actually the fourth commonest element in the crust.

Can this surface iron be, not Earth's original substance, but, at least in significant part, the accumulated meteoric dust of ages?

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According to my calculations, the dust would account for all the iron in the upper 1½ miles of the Earth's solid crust, which certainly accounts too for all the iron we've managed to dig up Can it be, then, that the modern technology of our Age of Steel feeds entirely on the accumulated dust of space, like whales feeding on plankton? I wonder.

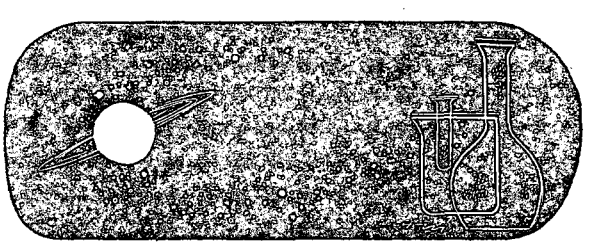
But what about the Moon? It travels through space with us and although it is smaller and has a weaker gravity, it, too, should sweep up a respectable quantity of micro-meteors.

To be sure, the Moon has no atmosphere to friction the micro-meteors to dust, but the act of striking the Moon's surface should develop enough heat to do the job.

Now it is already known, from a variety of evidence, that the Moon (or at least the level lowlands) is covered with a layer of dust. No one, however, knows for sure how thick this dust may be.

It strikes me that if this dust is the dust of falling micro-meteors, the thickness may be great. On the Moon there are no oceans to swallow the dust, or winds to disturb it, or life forms to mess it up generally one way or another. The dust that forms must just lie there, and, if the Moon gets anything like Earth's supply, it could be dozens of feet thick. In fact, the dust that strikes craters quite probably rolls down hill and collects at the bottom, forming "drifts" that could be fifty feet deep, or more. Why not?

I get a picture, therefore, of the first space-ship, picking out a nice level place for landing purposes, coming slowly downward tail-first . . . and sinking majestically out of sight.



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. . . and here Mr. Chandler, having somehow anticipated this month's science article, takes up in fiction what Dr. Asimov, in the preceding pages, has reported in fact. . . . (And such are the times in which we live that conceivably, by the time this issue is published, Mr. Chandler will have been preceded by, not theoretical, but actual fact.)

Critical Angle

by A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

WE WERE LUCKY TO ESCAPE WITH our lives and for that reason, I suppose, we have no real cause for complaint. All the same, it hurts, this being regarded as vandals by the very people who should be most grateful to us. And it's not only the astronomers who have it in for us—every third rate versifier who ever wrote slushy lyrics for popular songs hates our guts; and if it ever does come to a shooting war with the Soviet Union, and we lose, I rather fear that Hank and I will head the list of American citizens to be liquidated without delay.

It was all far too much of a rush job, of course. There should have been rockets round the Moon, unmanned and manned. There should have been unmanned rockets landing on the Moon. The much advertised telemetering equipment should have been given a real work-out. But politics—and international politics at that—got all tangled up with honest astronautics, and our scientists just had to do something really spectacular to save face.

They did.

Or we did.

And we got blamed.

It was the business of the Red Moon that started things off. The Russian rocket, you will remember, was unmanned and carried as payload a few tons of bright scarlet powder. It was fitted with a proximity fuse, and had a demolition charge which would not only destroy the rocket but spread the powder over a large area of the Moon's face.

It worked all right.

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There was no advance publicity. There were unconfirmed press reports of *beeps* on the twenty megacycle band apparently heading Moonward. These were taken with a large grain of salt; everybody remembered the panic started by similar rumors in the past. And then, of course, there came the night of a full Moon when it was obvious to all the world that the Russians had done it. The red stain was big enough to be seen with the naked eye. It even—although this may have been due more to chance than to skill—looked like a Red Star.

So there it was, covering Copernicus and more, the glaring proof that the Russians had beaten us to it again. We of the Rocket Service had this to say about it—if we had been in existence earlier it wouldn't have happened. It was the Army's fault, the Navy's fault, or the fault of the Air Force. Now that we were the only body concerned with astronautics we should, in time, catch up.

In time . . .

That was the snag.

The Press demanded action *now*, if not before. Congress was unanimous in demanding to know just what we had done and were doing with our appropriations. The General was called to the White House for a stormy interview.

On his return he sent for Hank Williams and myself. We weren't as worried as we might have been when we received the summons. Generals don't bawl out lowly Lieutenants in person — besides, we had clear consciences.

Old Back Blast was sitting behind his desk when we were ushered into the presence. He did not get to his feet—even so, his eyes were on a level with ours. "Sit down!" he barked. We sat down. "H'm!" he grunted. "Perhaps you'd better stand. I don't feel that I should look down on you."

"Why shouldn't you, sir?" asked Hank. "After all, you're a General, and we're only Lieutenants."

"After all," said Back Blast, looking at us with an odd sort of expression, "I'm only a General, and you're the first men in the Moon."

"Five hundred miles straight up," said Hank, "doesn't make us the first men in the Moon."

"Don't argue!" roared the General. "If I say that you're the first men in the Moon, then you are. Or you will be."

"Unless the Russians—" I began to say.

"*Damn* the Russians. Look men, I'm offering you a chance that I'd sell my own soul for. But I'm too old and too big and too heavy. I'm offering you the chance, you're the best two pilots I've got. Inside a week we can

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have MR-1 stripped of all her electronic gadgets and fitted out to carry a two man crew. Inside two weeks you can be planting the flag bang in the middle of that sanguinary red star."

"But the Russians—"

"I happen to know," he said coldly, "that the Russians are going about this according to all the rules. Their next step will be a rocket round the Moon with telemetering equipment, cameras and the usual hapless hound. After that there'll be a manned rocket round the Moon. After that, perhaps, a landing. That's what we *should* be doing. But I'm convinced that MR-1 can make it, and with ample propellant for the return journey."

I looked at Hank and he looked at me. We both looked at Back Blast Bradley. He looked back at us.

"Well?" he asked. "Are you in it, or do I get Ferranti and Smith for the job?"

"We're in it," we said together.

Six days wasn't long for all we had to do. We told ourselves that the Wright brothers had flown without either theory or data on the principles of heavier then air flight to help them. We told ourselves that we had books full of theory and enough data to take us in safety (perhaps) to Mars and beyond. But we knew that there should have been far more data, and that this data should have been collected by MR-1, the first of the circumlunar telemetering ships. This data we would have to get the hard way.

On the morning of the sixth day we went out to the field.

MR-1 was there. She was a big brute, as three stage rockets have to be. She made us feel very small. She made even the General look small. She was big enough looking at her from the outside, but our cabin would have been condemned by the A.S.P.C.A. had it been intended for the accommodation of two miniature poodles.

We were sealed in while the count down was under way. We sat there glumly. We should have been feeling elated, but we weren't. It was like sitting in an unusually cramped dentist's waiting room, waiting for the summons to the chair.

The count down finished. Hank shrugged his shoulders. He looked at me. I looked at him. I saw that his foot rested on the firing pedal. I saw the foot stamp down. Our chairs tipped backwards and held us. In spite of the soundproofing we were deafened by the roar of the rockets. In spite of our previous experience of acceleration we felt that our flattened guts would never again resume either their proper shapes or locations.

There was a brief respite when the first stage cut out—all this

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part of it, of course, was entirely automatic—and another when we dropped the second stage. It was a great relief when the motors of the third stage ceased firing. Free fall is a pleasant sensation if you have the right psychological make-up. It's far pleasanter than 5G acceleration, no matter what psychological make-up you have.

We released ourselves from our chairs and took observations. Earth was below us, as we had seen her so often during our flights outside the atmosphere. The Moon was to one side of our course. I must confess that I had the panicky feeling that we were going to miss her and fall forever through empty Space. I knew that we were heading for where the Moon would be when we got there, but knowing a thing and feeling it aren't the same.

After the first wonderment had worn off we began to feel very blasé about the whole business. We just couldn't see why there should be all this fuss about a voyage to the Moon. It was no more than a straightforward problem in ballistics, and the target was so big that it was practically impossible to miss it. When we came to the turnover point the gyroscopes functioned perfectly. Deceleration was commenced on time, and the indications were that we should have ample propellant for all our requirements.

Below us the Moon swelled with every passing hour. At two hundred miles up it was still a sphere, but a huge one. At one hundred miles it was a vast plain with pronouncedly curved horizons. At fifty miles the red star over Copernicus was not so perfect as it appeared from Earth. The five arms of it were of unequal lengths, and ragged. But it was still impressive.

Then there wasn't much time for sightseeing. We were dropping slowly, I suppose, but it seemed far too fast. It seemed that the Moon was coming up to hit us—the pockmarked plain with that huge, gaudy, blotchy red star, the sheer cliffs and jagged mountains, the dark, dark shadows. Then the crater rim was above us, sharp against the black sky.

We touched.

It was not the hard shock that we were anticipating. It was like landing on a pile of feathers. Hank cursed and cut the drive. He cursed again as our descent continued. A grey tide, deepening to blackness, washed up over the control room viewports.

I said, "I'm only the navigator, but don't you think you should get us out of here?"

He replied, with elaborate courtesy, "There's nothing I'd like better, old man. But it should be obvious, even to the navigator, that every venturi will be well choked by now, and that firing

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the rockets will, at the very least, blow our stern off."

"Choked?" I asked stupidly. "What with?"

"Not orange blossoms," he told me. "Nor rose petals. Dust. Some kind of dust. Maybe powdered rock, maybe metal. Don't ask me how it got here, but we must have landed right in the middle of a deep drift of the stuff."

"How do we get out?"

"That," he said, "is the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question."

We decided, then, to break out the bottle of brandy that we had brought along with us to toast our safe arrival on the Moon. We each had a stiff slug. We each had a second one. Reluctantly we put the bottle away.

We climbed into our spacesuits —and that part of it is easier in the writing than it was in the doing. As I've said already, our cabin was compact. It would have been hard enough for one man to struggle into a raincoat. The way we finally worked it, I had to curl up on the deck while Hank dressed, and he did the same while I got suited up.

Hank went into the airlock. I heard the pump start, saw the needle of the pressure gauge dropping. I saw the *Open* sign flash on the outer door indicator. I heard his voice, weak and distorted from my helmet phone.

"Like I said, it's dust. Luckily it's very light and fluffy. I've managed to get a space cleared round the door. Shut it again, and then come into the airlock yourself."

I did as he said. I waited until the pressure inside the airlock had built up, then clambered into it. I started the evacuation pump again. I opened the outer door.

Hank was outside, lying supine, arms and legs spread wide, in what looked like a small cave. I thought at first that something had happened to him. I was about to rush outside to his assistance when he stopped me.

"Don't make any fast moves!" he snapped, "or you'll bring the whole damned issue down on top of me!"

"Are you hurt?" I asked.

"No. But if I weren't lying like this I'd be neck deep in the infernal stuff by now. Stay where you are—we can talk just as well without your coming right outside.

"Now, Bill, this is the way that I've doped it out. We'll have to strip the ship of every non-essential piece of shielding or fairing. We shall want it all to line the sides of the shaft we're going to sink down to the stern and under the stern. We shall have to clear the jets, and make sure that there's a sufficiently large pit under them to take care of the back blast—"

"I didn't come all this way to be a miner," I said.

"Nor did I. But if we don't turn

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miners this will rank as one of the major disasters in American rocketry."

There was no arguing with that, so I went back inside the ship. After a short while he followed me.

We were amazed how much sheathing we were able to do without. It is quite remarkable how even when the saving of weight is the prime consideration the urge to make things look pretty — or neat — still persists. Safety comes into it too, of course. There is a lot to be said in favor of protective covering over wiring and plumbing.

What followed was hard work, and far from pleasant. Working by the light of our helmet lamps we sank the shaft along the ship's side, down to the stern. We dug a large pit under the exhausts, packing the fine, fluffy dust at its sides. Working in spells, and still far from happy about the prospects of radiation poisoning, we cleared the jets. It was after we were finished that we realized that we were standing on solid rock. This rather surprised us—we were beginning to think that the Moon was no more than a huge dust ball. We found, too, that the violently expanding vapors of the back blast would be diverted into a tunnel that ran down from the solid surface at a slight angle.

At last, dog-tired and soaked in perspiration, we climbed back to the airlock. I let Hank go in first, but as I waited outside, my feet against the side of the ship and my back against the wall of the shaft, I felt that it was a great mistake that MR-1 hadn't been given an airlock capable of handling two people at once. There was so much dust outside, and a sharp movement on my part could so easily bring it all tumbling down to bury me.

The airlock door opened, and with great relief I tumbled into the tiny compartment. A few minutes later I was sitting with Hank in the control room.

We had some more brandy.

"The trouble," he said, "is that there's a certain amount of cohesion about the stuff. It may pack tight ahead of us as we try to blast out . . ."

"It behaves almost like wet sand," I said, "which it shouldn't."

"Of course," he pointed out, "we have to remember that the critical angle is different here from what it is on Earth."

"The critical angle?" I asked.

"Yes. Or the angle of repose, if you'd rather call it that. It's a result of two forces—friction and gravity. You make a pile of, say, sand—and it will always fall into a cone of the same shape. You make a pile of coal, or bulk grain, and the angle of repose will always be the same for those two."

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"It must be different on the Moon," I said.

"Damn right it's different. . . ." He paused. "Talking about it won't get us anywhere."

"No. And we'd better show our noses—otherwise poor old Back Blast Bradley will be adding to his fine collection of ulcers."

"It'll be his own fault if he does," said Hank. "He should have given us radio. That's the worst of these rush jobs."

We finished the brandy, and gave it a try. We sat in our chairs, praying hard, while the ship lurched and shuddered, straining every seam. It was impossible for us to tell whether or not we were making progress through the dust—our acceleration was too slight to register on the gauge.

Then, abruptly, we broke through, and the glaring sunlight streamed through the ports. We lifted faster and faster and we looked down on an astounding scene.

As far as we could see, ring walls and mountain ranges and hummocks and hills were crumbling and sliding and splashing and falling. The Russians' red star was already buried by sweeping tides of dust . . . the entire surface of the Moon was swirling, and flattening.

And that is why there is no Man in the Moon any more. That is why the Lunar Apennines and the Leibnitz Range are no more, and the Great Wall is gone. That is why the Moon is now an almost featureless ball, with all its old mystery and glamor a thing of the past.

Mountains of dust—that's what the mystery and glamor came from—that and the ring walled craters. Mountains of dust, rearing high with a spurious, flimsy majesty, with a steepness that would be impossible on Earth, maintaining a precarious balance.

Our exhaust, roaring through the tunnels honeycombing the solid core, set up tremors and destroyed that tenuous stability.

And that's why nobody loves us any more—neither the astronomers, nor the public, nor the popular song writers.

Even so—I think that we should be entitled to a cut of the royalties from the latest effort. Have you heard it yet?

The Men Who Killed The Man In The Moon . . .

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"They had what the world has lost." With these words, John Collier, former U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, begins his pain-glinting study, INDIANS OF THE AMERICAS—THE LONG HOPE. *What is The Long Hope? As the red man has been crammed into the bewilderment of reservation life, as his resources and numbers have dwindled, his culture carefully, studiously stripped away—a hope that the white man would live up to treaty obligations has perforce lengthened and lengthened yet again, until it has become attenuated very nearly out of existence. It is out of this, out of the terrifying backward dimension of The Long Hope, that Avram Davidson fashions his memorable story.*

Or the Grasses Grow

by Avram Davidson

ABOUT HALFWAY ALONG THE NARROW and ill-paved county road between Crosby and Spanish Flats (all dips and hollows shimmering falsely like water in the heat till you get right up close to them), the road to Tickisall Agency branches off. No pretense of concrete or macadam—or even grading—deceives the chance or rare purposeful traveller. Federal, State, and County governments have better things to do with their money: Tickisall pays no taxes, and its handful of residents have only recently (and most grudgingly) been accorded the vote.

The sunbaked earth is cracked and riven. A few dirty sheep and a handful of scrub cows share its scanty herbage with an occasional swaybacked horse or stunted burro. Here and there a gaunt automobile rests in the thin shadow of a board shack, and a child, startled doubtless by the smooth sound of a strange motor, runs like a lizard through the dusty wastes to hide, and then to peer. Melon vines dried past all hope of fruit lie in patches next to whispery, tindery cornstalks.

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And in the midst of all this, next to the only spring which never goes dry, are the only painted buildings, the only decent buildings in the area. In the middle of the green lawn is a pole with the flag, and right behind the pole, over the front door, the sign:

U. S. BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
TICKISALL AGENCY
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

There were already a few Indians gathering around that afternoon, the women in cotton-print dresses, the men in overalls. There would soon be more. This was scheduled as the last day for the Tickisall Agency and Reservation. Congress had passed the bill, the President had signed it, the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs had issued the order. It was supposed to be a great day for the Tickisall Nation—only the Tickisalls, what was left of them, didn't seem to think so. Not a man or woman of them spoke. Not a child whimpered. Not a dog barked.

Before Uncle Fox-head sat a basket with four different kinds of clay, and next to the basket was a medicine gourd full of water. The old man rolled the clay between his moistened palms, singing in a low voice. Then he washed his hands and sprinkled them with pollen. Then he took up the prayer-sticks, made of juniper—(once there had been juniper trees on the reservation, once there had been many trees)—and painted with the signs of Thunder, Sun, Moon, Rain, Lightning. There were feathers tied to the sticks—once there had been birds, too . . .

Oh, People - of - The - Hidden Places,
Oh, take our message to The Hidden Places,
Swiftly, swiftly, now . . .

the old man chanted, shaking the medicine-sticks.

Oh, you, Swift Ones, People-with-no-legs,
Take our message to The-People-with-no-bodies,
Swiftly, swiftly, now . . .

The old man's skin was like a cracked, worn moccassin. With his turkey-claw hand he took up the gourd rattle, shook it: West, South, Up, Down, East, North.

Oh, People - of - the - hollow Earth,
Take our message to the hollow Earth,
Take our song to our Fathers and Mothers,
Take our cry to the Spirit People,
Take and go, take and go,
Swiftly, swiftly, now . . .

The snakes rippled across the ground and were gone, one by

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one. The old man's sister's son helped him back to his sheepskin, spread in the shade, where he half-sat, half-lay, panting.

His great-nephews, Billy Cottonwood and Sam Quarterhorse, were talking together in English. "There was a fellow in my outfit," Cottonwood said, "a fellow from West Virginia, name of Corrothers. Said his grandmother claimed she could charm away warts. So I said my great-uncle claimed he could make snakes. And they all laughed fit to kill, and said, 'Chief, when you try a snow-job, it turns into a blizzard!' . . . Old Corrothers," he reflected. "We were pretty good buddies. Maybe I'll go to West Virginia and look him up. I could hitch, maybe."

Quarterhorse said, "Yeah, you can go to West Virginia, and I can go to L.A.—but what about the others? Where *they* going to go if Washington refuses to act?"

The fond smile of recollection left his cousin's lean, brown face. "I don't know," he said. "I be damned and go to Hell, if I know." And then the old pick-up came rattling and coughing up to the house, and Sam said, "Here's Newton."

Newton Quarterhorse, his brother Sam, and Billy Cottonwood, were the only three Tickisall's who had passed the physical and gone into the Army. There weren't a lot of others who were of conscripting age (or any other age, for that matter), and those whom TB didn't keep out, other ailments active or passive did. Once there had been trees on the Reservation, and birds, and deer, and healthy men.

The wash-faded Army suntans had been clean and fresh as always when Newt set out for Crosby, but they were dusty and sweaty now. He took a piece of wet burlap out and removed a few bottles from it. "Open these, Sam, will you, while I wash," he said. "Cokes for us, strawberry pop for the old people . . . How's Uncle Fox-Head?"

Billy grunted. "Playing at making medicine snakes again. Do you suppose if we believed he could, he could?"

Newt shrugged. "So. Well, maybe if the telegrams don't do any good, the snakes will. And I'm damned sure they won't do no worse. That son of a bitch at the Western Union office," he said, looking out over the drought-bitten land. "'Sending a smoke-signal to the Great White Father again, Sitting Bull?' he says, smirking and sneering. I told him; 'You just take the money and send the wire.' They looked at me like coyotes looking at a sick calf." Abruptly, he turned away and went to dip his handkerchief in the bucket. Water was hard come by.

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The lip of the bottle clicked against one of Uncle Fox-head's few teeth. He drank nosily, then licked his lips. "Today we drink the white man's sweet water," he said. "What will we drink tomorrow?" No one said anything. "I will tell you, then," he continued. "Unless the white man relent, we will drink the bitter waters of The Hollow Places. They are bitter, but they are strong and good." He waved his withered hand in a semi-circle. "All this will go," he said, "and the Fathers and mothers of The People will return and lead us to our old home inside the Earth." His sister's son, who had never learned English nor gone to school, moaned. "Unless the white men relent," said the old man.

"They never have," said Cottonwood, in Tickisall. In English, he said, "What will he do when he sees that nothing happens tomorrow except that we get kicked the Hell out of here?"

Newt said, "Die, I suppose . . . which might not be a bad idea. For all of us."

His brother turned and looked at him. "If you're planning Quarterhorse's Last Stand, forget about it. There aren't twenty rounds of ammunition on the whole reservation."

Billy Cottonwood raised his head. "We could maybe move in with the Apahoya," he suggested. "They're just as dirt-poor as we are, but there's more of them, and I guess they'll hold on to their land a while yet." His cousins shook their heads. "Well, not for us. But the others . . . Look, I spoke to Joe Feather Cloud that last time I was at the Apahoya Agency. If we give him the truck and the sheep, he'll take care of Uncle Fox-head."

Sam Quarterhorse said he supposed that was the best thing. "For the old man, I mean. I made up *my* mind. I'm going to L.A. and pass for Colored." He stopped.

They waited till the new shiny automobile had gone by towards the Agency in a cloud of dust. Newt said, "The buzzards are gathering." Then he asked, "How come, Sam?"

"Because I'm tired of being an Indian. It has no present and no future. I can't be a white, they won't have me—the best I could hope for would be that they laugh: 'How, Big Chief'—'Hi, Blanket-bottom.' Yeah, I *could* pass for a Mexican as far as my looks go, only the Mexes won't have me, either. But the Colored will. And there's millions and millions of them—whatever price they pay for it, they never have to feel lonely. And they've got a fine, bitter contempt for the whites that I can use a lot of. 'Pecks,' they call them. I don't know where they got the name from, but, Damn! it sure fits them. They've been pecking away at us

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for over a hundred years."

They talked on some more, and all the while the dust never settled in the road. They watched the whole tribe, what there was of it, go by towards the agency—in old trucks, in buckboards, on horses, on foot. And after some time, they loaded up the pick-up and followed.

The Indians sat all over the grass in front of the Agency, and for once no one bothered to chase them off. They just sat, silent, waiting. A group of men from Crosby and Spanish Flats were talking to the Superintendent; there were maps in their hands. The cousins went up to them; the white men looked out of the corners of their eyes, confidence still tempered — but only a bit — by wariness.

"Mr. Jenkins," Newt said to one, "most of this is your doing and you know how I feel about it—"

"You better not make any trouble, Quarterhorse," said another townsman.

Jenkins said, "Let the boy have his say."

"—but I know you'll give me a straight answer. What's going to be done here?"

Jenkins was a leathery little man, burnt almost as dark as an Indian. He looked at him, not unkindly, through the spectacles which magnified his blue eyes. "Why, you know, son, there's nothing personal in all this. The land belongs to them that can hold it and use it. It was made to be used. You people've had your chance, Lord knows— Well, no speeches. You see, here on the map, where this here dotted line is? The county is putting through a new road to connect with a new highway the state's going to construct. There'll be a lot of traffic through here, and this Agency ought to make a fine motel.

"And right along *here*—" his blunt finger traced, "—there's going to be the main irrigation canal. There'll be branches all through the Reservation. I reckon we can raise some mighty fine alfalfa. Fatten some mighty fine cattle . . . I always thought, son, you'd be good with stock, if you had some good stock to work with. Not these worthless scrubs. If you want a job—"

One of the men cleared his sinus cavities with an ugly sound, and spat. "Are you out of your mind, Jenk? Here we been workin for years ta git these Indyins outa here, and you tryin ta make um stay . . ."

The Superintendent was a tall, fat, soft man with a loose smile. He said ingratiatingly, "Mr. Jenkins realizes, as I'm sure you do too, Mr. Waldo, that the policy of the United States government is, and always has been—except for the unfortunate period when

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John Collier was in charge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs — man may have *meant* well, but Lord! hopeless sentimentalist—well, our policy has always been: Prepare the Indian to join the general community. Get him off the reservation. Turn the tribal lands over to the *individual*. And it's been done with other tribes, and now, finally, it's being done with this one." He beamed.

Newt gritted his teeth. Then he said, "And the result was always the same—as soon as the tribal lands were given to the individual red man they damn quick passed into the hand of the individual white man. That's what happened with other tribes, and now, finally, it's being done with this one. Don't you *know*, Mr. Scott, that we can't adapt ourselves to the system of individual land-ownership? That we just aren't strong enough by ourselves to hold onto real estate? That—"

"Root, hog, er die," said Mr. Waldo.

"Are men *hogs?*" Newt cried.

Waldo said, at large, "*Told* ya he w's a trouble-maker." Then, bringing his long, rough, red face next to Newt's, he said, "Listen, Indyin, you and all y'r stinkin relatives are through. If Jenkins is damnfool enough ta hire ya, that's his look-out. But if he don't, you better stay far, far away, because nobody likes ya, nobody wants ya, and now that the Guvermint in Worshennon is finely come ta their sentces, nobody is goin ta protec ya — you and y'r mangy cows and y'r smutty-nosed sheep and y'r blankets—"

Newt's face showed his feelings, but before he could voice them, Billy Cottonwood broke in. "Mr. Scott," he said, "we sent a telegram to Washington, asking to halt the break-up of the Reservation."

Scott smiled his sucaryl smile. "Well, that's your privilege as a citizen."

Cottonwood spoke on. He mentioned the provisions of the bill passed by Congress, authorizing the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to liquidate, at his discretion, all reservations including less than one hundred residents, and to divide the land among them.

"Mr. Scott, when the Treaty of Juniper Butte was made between the United States and the Tickisalls," Cottonwood said, "there were thousands of us. That treaty was to be kept 'as long as the sun shall rise or the grasses grow.' The Government pledged itself to send us doctors—it didn't, and we died like flies. It pledged to send us seed and cattle; it sent us no seed and we had to eat the few hundred head of stock-yard cast-offs they did send us, to keep from starving. The Government was to keep our land safe for us forever, in a sacred trust—and in

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every generation they've taken away more and more. Mr. Scott—Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Waldo, and all you other gentlemen—you knew, didn't you, when you were kind enough to loan us money—or rather, to give us credit at the stores, when this drought started—you knew that this bill was up before Congress, didn't you?"

No one answered him. "You knew that it would pass, and that turning our lands over to us wouldn't mean a darned thing, didn't you? That we already owed so much money that our creditors would take all our land? Mr. Scott, how can the Government let this happen to us? It made a treaty with us to keep our lands safe for us 'as long as the sun rises or the grasses grow.' Has the sun stopped rising? Has the grass stopped growing? We believed in you—we kept our part of the treaty. Mr. Scott, won't you wire Washington—won't you other gentlemen do the same? To stop this thing that's being done to us? It's almost a hundred years now since we made treaty, and we've always hoped. Now we've only got till midnight to hope. Unless—?"

But the Superintendent said, No, he couldn't do that. And Jenkins shook his head, and said, sorry; it was really all for the best. Waldo shrugged, produced a packet of legal papers. "I've been deppatized to serve all these," he said. "Soons the land's all passed over ta individj'l ownership—which is 12 P.M. tanight. But if you give me y'r word (whatever that's worth) not ta make no trouble, why, guess it c'n wait till morning. Yo go back ta y'r shacks and I'll be round, come morning. We'll sleep over with Scott f'r tanight."

Sam Quarterhorse said, "We won't make any trouble, no. Not much use in that. But we'll wait right here. It's still possible we'll hear from Washington before midnight."

The Superintendent's house was quite comfortable. Logs (cut by Indian labor from the last of the Reservation's trees) blazed in the big fireplace (built by Indian labor). A wealth of rugs (woven by Indians in the Agency school) decorated walls and floor. The card-game had been on for some time when they heard the first woman start to wail. Waldo looked up nervously. Jenkins glanced at the clock. "Twelve midnight," he said. "Well, that's it. All over but the details. Took almost a hundred years, but it'll be worth it."

Another woman took up the keening. It swelled to a chorus of heartbreak, then died away. Waldo picked up his cards, then put them down again. An old man's voice had begun a chant. Someone took it up—then an-

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other. Drums joined it, and rattles. Scott said, "That was old Fox-head who started that just now. They're singing the death-song. They'll go on till morning."

Waldo swore. Then he laughed. "Let'm," he said. "It's their last morning."

Jenkins woke up first. Waldo stirred to wakefulness as he heard the other dressing. "What time is it?" he asked.

"Don't know," Jenkins said. "But it feels to me like gettin-up time. . . . You hear them go just a while back? No? Don't know how you could miss it. Singing got real loud—seemed like a whole lot of new voices joined in. Then they all got up and moved off. Wonder where they went . . . I'm going to have a look around outside." He switched on his flash-light and left the house. In another minute Waldo joined him, knocking on Scott's door as he passed.

The ashes of the fire still smoldered, making a dull red glow. It was very cold. Jenkins said, "Look here, Waldo—look." Waldo followed the flash-light's beam, said he didn't see anything. "It's the grass . . . it was green last night. It's all dead and brown now. Look at it . . ."

Waldo shivered. "Makes no difference. We'll get it green again. The land's ours now."

Scott joined them, his overcoat hugging his ears. "Why is it so cold?" he asked. "What's happened to the clock? Who was tinkering with the clock? It's past eight by the clock—it ought to be light by now. Where did all the Tickisalls go to? What's happening? There's something in the air —I don't like the feel of it. I'm sorry I ever agreed to work with you, no matter what you paid me—"

Waldo said, roughly, nervously, "Shut up. Some damned Indyin sneaked in and must of fiddled with the clock. Hell with um. Govermint's on *our* side now. Soons it's daylight we'll clear um all out of here f'r good."

Shivering in the bitter cold, uneasy for reasons they only dimly perceived, the three white men huddled together alone in the dark by the dying fire, and waited for the sun to rise.

And waited . . . and waited . . . and waited. . . .

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The rich variety of Poul Anderson's talent has been demonstrated here in such diverse offerings as swashbuckling, romantic adventures, subtle, quiet character studies, broad satire and parody, Time Patrol tales, with beautifully integrated historical backgrounds (a fine new one in this series will be coming up shortly), hilarious Hoka farces (with Gordon R. Dickson), and solid, tense stories of mankind under the terrible stress of coping with itself and the world—and worlds—around it. "Wildcat" is one of these last—and a particularly good example. In it, Mr. Anderson dissects an urgent, major problem of the near future (?) in a dramatic account of a few men drilling for oil in the Jurassic age, fighting off plesiosauri and tyrannosauri, and suffering from an awareness that their survival in harmony is essential to the preservation of their world in the twentieth century. . . .

WILDCAT

by POUL ANDERSON

IT WAS RAINING AGAIN, HOT AND heavy out of a hidden sky, and the air stank with swamp. Herries could just see the tall derricks a mile away, under a floodlight glare, and hear their engines mutter. Further away, a bull brontosaur cried and thunder went through the night.

Herries' boots resounded hollowly on the dock. Beneath the slicker, his clothes lay sweat-soggy, the rain spilled off his hat and down his collar. He swore in a tired voice and stepped onto his gangplank.

Light from the shack on the barge glimmered off drenched wood. He saw the snaky neck just in time, as it reared over the gangplank rail and struck at him. He sprang back, grabbing for the Magnum carbine slung over one shoulder. The plesiosaur hissed monstrously and flipper-slapped the water. It was like a cannon going off.

Herries threw the gun to his shoulder and fired. The long sleek form took the bullet—somewhere—and screamed. The raw noise hurt the man's eardrums.

Feet thudded over the wharf. Two guards reached Herries and began to shoot into the dark water. The door of the shack

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opened and a figure stood back against its yellow oblong, a tommy gun stammering idiotically in his hands.

"Cut it out!" bawled Herries. "That's enough! Hold your fire!"

Silence fell. For a moment, only the ponderous rainfall had voice. Then the brontosaur bellowed again, remotely, and there were seethings and croakings in the water.

"He got away," said Herries. "Or more likely his pals are now stripping him clean. Blood smell." A dull anger lifted in him, he turned and grabbed the lapel of the nearest guard. "How often do I have to tell you characters, every gangway has to have a man near it with grenades?"

"Yes, sir. Sorry, sir." Herries was a large man, and the other face looked up at him, white and scared in the wan electric radiance. "I just went off to the head—"

"You'll stay here," said Herries. "I don't care if you explode. Our presence draws these critters, and you ought to know that by now. They've already snatched two men off this dock. They nearly got a third tonight—me. At the first suspicion of anything out there, you're to pull the pin on a grenade and drop it in the water, understand? One more dereliction like this, and you're fired— No." He stopped, grinning humorlessly. "That's not much of a punishment, is it? A week in hack on bread."

The other guard bristled. "Look here, Mr. Herries, we got our rights. The union—"

"Your precious union is a hundred million years in the future," snapped the engineer. "It was understood that this is a dangerous job, that we're subject to martial law, and that I can discipline anyone who steps out of line. Okay—remember it."

He turned his back and tramped across the gangplank to the barge deck. It boomed underfoot. The shack had been closed again, with the excitement over. He opened the door and stepped through, peeling off his slicker.

Four men were playing poker beneath an unshaded bulb. The room was small and cluttered, hazy with tobacco smoke and the Jurassic mist. A fifth man lay on one of the bunks, reading. The walls were gaudy with pinups.

Olson riffled the cards and looked up. "Close call, boss," he remarked, almost casually. "Want to sit in?"

"Not now," said Herries. He felt his big square face sagging with weariness. "I'm bushed." He nodded at Carver, who had just returned from a prospecting trip further north. "We lost one more derrick today."

"Huh?" said Carver. "What happened this time?"

"It turns out this is the mating

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season." Herrie found a chair, sat down, and began to pull off his boots. "How they tell one season from another, I don't know—length of day, maybe—but anyhow the brontosaurs aren't shy of us any more—they're going nuts. Now they go gallyhooting around and trample down charged fences or anything else that happens to be in the way. They've smashed three rigs to date, and one man."

Carver raised an eyebrow in his chocolate-colored face. It was a rather sour standing joke here, how much better the Negroes looked than anyone else. A white man could be outdoors all his life in this clouded age and remain pasty. "Haven't you tried shooting them?" he asked.

"Ever tried to kill a brontosaur with a rifle?" snorted Herries. "We can mess 'em up a little with .50-caliber machine guns or a bazooka—just enough so they decide to get out of the neighborhood—but being less intelligent than a chicken, they take off in any old direction. Makes as much havoc as the original rampage." His left boot hit the floor with a sullen thud. "I've been begging for a couple of atomic howitzers, but it has to go through channels. . . . Channels!" Fury spurted in him. "Five hundred human beings stuck in this nightmare world, and our requisitions have to go through channels!"

Olson began to deal the cards. Polansky gave the man in the bunk a chill glance. "You're the wheel, Symonds," he said. "Why the devil don't you goose the great Transtemporal Oil Company?"

"Nuts," said Carver. "The great benevolent all-wise United States Government is what counts. How about it, Symonds?"

You never got a rise out of Symonds, the human tape recorder: just a playback of the latest official line. Now he laid his book aside and sat up in his bunk. Herries noticed that the volume was *Marcus Aurelius, in Latin* yet.

Symonds looked at Carver through steel-rimmed glasses and said in a dusty tone: "I am only the comptroller and supply supervisor. In effect, a chief clerk. Mr. Herries is in charge of operations."

He was a small shriveled man, with thin gray hair above a thin gray face. Even here, he wore stiff-collared shirt and sober tie. One of the hardest things to take about him was the way his long nose waggled when he talked.

"In charge!" Herries spat expertly into a gobboon. "Sure, I direct the prospectors and the drillers and everybody else on down through the bull cook. But who handles the paperwork—all our reports and receipts and requests? You." He tossed his right boot on the floor. "I don't want the name of boss if I can't get the

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stuff to defend my own men."

Something bumped against the supervisors' barge; it quivered and the chips on the table rattled. Since there was no outcry from the dock guards, Herries ignored the matter. Some swimming giant. And except for the plesiosaurs and the non-malicious bumbling bronties, all the big dinosaurs encountered so far were fairly safe. They might step on you in an absent-minded way, but most of them were peaceful and you could outrun those which weren't. It was the smaller carnivores, about the size of a man, leaping out of brush or muck with a skullful of teeth, which had taken most of the personnel lost. Their reptile life was too diffuse: even mortally wounded by elephant gun or grenade launcher, they could rave about for hours. They were the reason for sleeping on barges tied up by this sodden coast, along the gulf which would some day be Oklahoma.

Symonds spoke in his tight little voice: "I send your recommendations in, of course. The project office passes on them."

"I'll say it does," muttered young Greenstein irreverently.

"Please do not blame me," insisted Symonds.

I wonder. Herries glowered at him. Symonds had an in of some kind. That was obvious. A man who was simply a glorified clerk would not be called to Washington, for unspecified conferences with unspecified people, as often as this one was. But what was he, then?

A favorite relative? No . . . in spite of high pay, this operation was no political plum. FBI? Scarcely . . . the security checks were all run in the future. A hack in the bureaucracy? That was more probable. Symonds was here to see that oil was pumped and dinosaurs chased away and the hideously fecund jungle kept beyond the fence according to the least comma in the latest directive from headquarters.

The small man continued: "It has been explained to you officially that the heavier weapons are all needed at home. The international situation is critical. You ought to be thankful you are safely back in the past."

"Heat, large economy-size alligators, and not a woman for a hundred million years," grunted Olson. "I'd rather be blown up. Who dealt this mess?"

"You did," said Polansky. "Gimme two, and make 'em good."

Herries stripped the clothes off his thick hairy body, went to the rear of the cabin, and entered the shower cubby. He left the door open, to listen in. A boss was always lonely. Maybe he should have married when he had the chance. But then he wouldn't be here. Except for Symonds, who was a widower and in any case

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more a government than company man, Thansoco had been hiring only young bachelors for operations in the field.

"It seems kinda funny to talk about the international situation," remarked Carver. "Hell, there won't be any international situation for several geological periods."

"The inertial effect makes simultaneity a valid approximational concept," declared Symonds pedantically. His habit of lecturing scientists and engineers on their professions had not endeared him to them. "If we spend a year in the past, we must necessarily return to our own era to find a year gone, since the main projector operates only at the point of its own existence which—"

"Oh, stow it," said Greenstein. "I read the orientation manual too." He waited until everyone had cards, then shoved a few chips forward and added: "druther spend my time a little nearer home. Say with Cleopatra."

"Impossible," Symonds told him. "Inertial effect again. In order to send a body into the past at all, the projector must energize it so much that the minimal time-distance we can cover becomes precisely the one we have covered to arrive here, one hundred and one million, three hundred twenty-seven thousand, et cetera, years."

"But why not time-hop into the future? You don't buck entropy in that direction. I mean, I suppose there is an inertial effect there, too, but it would be much smaller, so you could go into the future—"

"—about a hundred years at a hop, according to the handbook," supplied Polansky.

"So why don't they look at the twenty-first century?" asked Greenstein.

"I understand that that is classified information," Symonds said. His tone implied that Greenstein had skirted some unimaginably gross obscenity.

Herries put his head out of the shower. "Sure it's classified," he said. "They'd classify the wheel if they could. But use your reason and you'll see why travel into the future isn't practical. Suppose you jump a hundred years ahead. How do you get home to report what you've seen? The projector will yank you a hundred million years back, less the distance you went forward."

Symonds dove back into his book. Somehow, he gave an impression of lying there rigid with shock that men dared think after he had spoken the phrase of taboo.

"Uh . . . yes. I get it." Greenstein nodded. He had only been recruited a month ago, to replace a man drowned in a grass-veiled bog. Before then, like nearly all the world, he had had no idea time travel existed. So far he had

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been too busy to examine its implications.

To Herries it was an old, worn-thin story.

"I daresay they did send an expedition a hundred million years up, so it could come back to the same week as it left," he said. "Don't ask me what was found. Classified: Tip-top Secret, Burn Before Reading."

"You know, though," said Polansky in a thoughtful tone, "I been thinking some myself. Why are we here at all? I mean, oil is necessary to defense and all that, but it seems to me it'd make more sense for the U.S. Army to come through, cross the ocean, and establish itself where all the enemy nations are going to be. Then we'd have a gun pointed at their heads!"

"Nice theory," said Herries. "I've daydreamed myself. But there's only one main projector, to energize all the subsidiary ones. Building it took almost the whole world supply of certain rare earths. Its capacity is limited. If we started sending military units into the past, it'd be a slow and cumbersome operation—and not being a Security officer, I'm not required to kid myself that Moscow doesn't know we've got time travel. They've probably even given Washington a secret ultimatum: 'Start sending back war material in any quantity, and we'll hit you with everything we've got.' But evidently they don't feel strongly enough about our pumping oil on our own territory—or what will one day be our own territory—to make it a, uh, *casus belli.*"

"Just as we don't feel their satellite base in the twentieth century is dangerous enough for us to fight about," said Greenstein, "but I suspect we're the reason they agreed to make the Moon a neutral zone. Same old standoff."

"I wonder how long it can last?" murmured Polansky.

"Not much longer," said Olson. "Read your history. I'll see you, Greenstein, boy, and raise you two."

Herries let the shower run about him. At least there was no shortage of hot water. Transoco had sent back a complete atomic pile. But civilization and war still ran on oil, he thought, and oil was desperately short up there.

Time, he reflected, was a paradoxical thing. The scientists had told him it was utterly rigid. Perhaps, though of course it would be a graveyard secret, the cloak-and-dagger boys had tested that theory the hard way, going back into the historical past (it could be done after all, Herries suspected, though by a roundabout route which consumed fabulous amounts of energy) in an attempt to head off the Bolshevik Revolution. It would have failed. Neither past nor future could be changed

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—they could only be discovered. Some of Transoco's men had discovered death, an eon before they were born. . . . But there would not be such a shortage of oil up in the future if Transoco had not gone back and drained it in the past. A self-causing future—

Primordial stuff, petroleum. Hoyle's idea seemed to be right, it had not been formed by rotting dinosaurs but was present from the beginning. It was the stuff which had stuck the planets together.

And, Herries thought, was sticking to him now. He reached for the soap.

Earth spun gloomily through hours, and morning crept over wide brown waters. There was no real day as men understood day—the heavens were a leaden sheet with dirty black rainclouds scudding below the permanent fog layers.

Herries was up early, for there was a shipment scheduled. He came out of the bosses' messhall and stood for a moment looking over the mud beach and the few square miles of cleared land, sleazy buildings and gaunt derricks inside an electric mesh fence. Automation replaced thousands of workers, so that five hundred men were enough to handle everything, but still the compound was the merest scratch, and the jungle remained a terrifying black wall. Not that the trees were so utterly alien — besides the archaic grotesqueries, like ferns and mosses of gruesome size, there were cycad, redwood, and gingko, scattered prototypes of oak and willow and birch. But Herries missed wild flowers.

A working party with its machines was repairing the fence the brontosaur had smashed through yesterday, the well it had wrecked, the viciously persistent inroads of grass and vine. A caterpillar tractor hauled a string of loaded wagons across raw red earth. A helicopter buzzed overhead, on watch for dinosaurs. It was the only flying thing. There had been a nearby pterodactyl rookery, but the men had cleaned that out months ago. When you got right down to facts, the most sinister animal of all was man.

Greenstein joined Herries. The new assistant was tall, slender, with curly brown hair and the defenseless face of youth. Above boots and dungarees he wore a blue sports shirt; it offered a kind of defiance to this sullen world. "Smoke?" he invited.

"Thanks." Herries accepted the cigaret. His eyes still dwelt on the derricks. Their walking beams went up and down, up and down, like a joyless copulation. Perhaps a man could get used to the Jurassic rain forest and eventually see some dark beauty there, for it was at least life; but this field

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would always remain hideous, being dead and pumping up the death of men.

"How's it going, Sam?" he asked when the tobacco had soothed his palate.

"All right," said Greenstein. "I'm shaking down. But God, it's good to know today is mail call!"

They stepped off the porch and walked toward the transceiving station. Mud squelched under their feet. A tuft of something, too pale and fleshy to be grass, stood near Herries' path. The yard crew had better uproot that soon, or in a week it might claim the entire compound.

"Girl friend, I suppose," said the chief. "That does make a month into a hell of a long drought between letters."

Greenstein flushed and nodded earnestly. "We're going to get married when my two years here are up," he said.

"That's what most of 'em plan on. A lot of saved-up pay and valuable experience—sure, you're fixed for life." It was on Herries' tongue to add that the life might be a short one, but he suppressed the impulse.

Loneliness dragged at his nerves. There was no one waiting in the future for him. It was just as well, he told himself during the endless nights. Hard enough to sleep without worrying about some woman in the same age as the cobalt bomb.

"I've got her picture here, if you'd like to see it," offered Greenstein shyly.

His hand was already on his wallet. A tired grin slid up Herries' mouth. "Right next to your . . . er . . . heart, eh?" he murmured.

Greenstein blinked, threw back his head, and laughed. The field had not heard so merry a laugh in a long while. Nevertheless, he showed the other man a pleasant-faced, unspectacular girl.

Out in the swamp, something hooted and threshed about.

Impulsively, Herries asked: "How do you feel about this operation, Sam?"

"Huh? Why, it's . . . interesting work. And a good bunch of guys."

"Even Symonds?"

"Oh, he means well."

"We could have more fun if he didn't bunk with us."

"He can't help being . . . old," said Greenstein.

Herries glanced at the boy. "You know," he said, "you're the first man in the Jurassic Period who's had a good word for Ephraim Symonds. I appreciate that. I'd better not say whether or not I share the sentiment, but I appreciate it."

His boots sludged ahead, growing heavier with each step. "You still haven't answered my first question," he resumed after a while. "I didn't ask if you en-

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joyed the work, I asked how you feel about it. Its purpose. We have the answers here to questions which science has been asking—will be asking—for centuries. And yet, except for a couple of underequipped paleobiologists, who aren't allowed to publish their findings, we're doing nothing but rape the earth in an age before it has even conceived us."

Greenstein hesitated. Then, with a surprising dryness: "You're getting too psychoanalytic for me, I'm afreud."

Herries chuckled. The day seemed a little more alive, all at once. "*Touché!* Well, I'll rephrase Joe Polansky's question of last night. Do you think the atomic standoff in our home era—to which this operation is potentially rather important—is stable?"

Greenstein considered for a moment. "No," he admitted. "Deterrence is a stopgap till something better can be worked out."

"They've said as much since it first began. Nothing has been done. It's improbable that anything will be. Ole Olson describes the international situation as a case of the irresistibly evil force colliding with the immovably stupid object."

"Ole likes to use extreme language," said Greenstein. "So tell me, what else could our side do?"

"I wish to God I had an answer." Herries sighed. "Pardon me. We avoid politics here, as much as possible; we're escapists in several senses of the word. But frankly, I sound out new men. I was doing it to you. Because in spite of what Washington thinks, a Q clearance isn't all that a man needs to work here."

"Did I pass?" asked Greenstein, a bit too lightly.

"Sure. So far. You may wish you hadn't. The burning issue today is not whether to tolerate 'privileged neutralism,' or whatever the latest catchword is up there. It's: Did I get the armament I've been asking for?"

The transceiving station bulked ahead. It was a long corrugated-iron shed, but dwarfed by the tanks which gleamed behind it. Every one of those was filled, Herries knew. Today they would pump their crude oil into the future. Or rather, if you wanted to be exact, their small temporal unit would establish a contact and the gigantic main projector in the twentieth century would then "suck" the liquid toward itself. And in return the compound would get—food, tools, weapons, supplies, and mail. Herries prayed there would be at least one howitzer . . . and no VIP's. That Senator a few months ago!

For a moment, contemplating the naked ugliness of tanks and pumps and shed, Herries had a vision of this one place stretching through time. It would be abandoned some day, when the wells

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were exahusted, and rain and jungle would rapidly eat the last thing traces of man. Later would come the sea, and then it would be dry land again, a cold prairie scoured by glacial winds, and then it would grow warm and . . . on and on, a waste of years until the time projector was invented and the great machine stood on this spot. And afterward? Herries didn't like to think what might be here after that.

Symonds was already present. He popped rabbit-like out of the building, a coded manifest in one hand a pencil behind his ear: "Good morning, Mr. Herries," he said. His tone gave its usual impression of stiff self-importance.

" 'Morning. All set in there?" Herries went in to see for himself. A spatter of rain began to fall, noisy on the metal roof. The technicians were at their posts and reported clear. Outside, one by one, the rest of the men were drifting up. This was mail day, and little work would be done for the remainder of it.

Herries laid the sack of letters to the future inside the shed in its proper spot. His chronometer said one minute to go. "Stand by!" At the precise time, there was a dim whistle in the air and an obscure pulsing glow. Meters came to life. The pumps began to throb, driving crude oil through a pipe which faced open-ended into the shed. Nothing emerged that Herries could see. Good. Everything in order. The other end of the pipe was a hundred million years in the future. The mail sack vanished with a small puff, as air rushed in where it had waited. Herries went back outside.

"Ah . . . excuse me."

He turned around, with a jerkiness that told him his nerves were half unraveled. "Yes?" he snapped.

"May I see you a moment?" asked Symonds. "Alone?" And the pale eyes behind the glasses said it was not a request but an order.

Herries nodded curtly, swore at the men for hanging around idle when the return shipment wasn't due for hours, and led the way to a porch tacked onto one side of the transceiving station. There were some camp stools beneath it. Symonds hitched up his khakis as if they were a business suit and sat primly down, his thin hands flat on his knees.

"A special shipment is due today," Symonds said. "I was not permitted to discuss it until the last moment."

Herries curled his mouth. "Go tell Security that the Kremlin won't be built for a hundred million years. Maybe they haven't heard."

"What no one knew, no one could put into a letter home."

"The mail is censored anyway. Our friends and relatives think we're working somewhere in

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Asia." Herries spat into the mud and said: "And in another year the first lot of recruits are due home. Plan to shoot them as they emerge, so they can't possibly talk in their sleep?"

Symonds seemed too humorless even to recognize sarcasm. He pursed his lips and declared: "Some secrets need be kept for a few months only; but within that period, they *must* be kept."

"Okay, okay. Let's hear what's coming today."

"I am not allowed to tell you that. But about half the total tonnage will be crates marked Top Secret. These are to remain in the shed, guarded night and day by armed men." Symonds pulled a slip of paper from his jacket. "These men will be assigned to that duty, each one taking eight hours a week."

Herries glanced at the names. He did not know everyone here by sight, though he came close, but he recognized several of these. "Brave, discreet, and charter subscribers to National Review," he murmured. "Teacher's pets. All right. Though I'll have to curtail exploration correspondingly—either that, or else cut down on their guards and sacrifice a few extra lives."

"I think not. Let me continue. You will get these orders in the mail today, but I will prepare you for them now. A special house must be built for the crates, as rapidly as possible, and they must be moved there immediately upon its completion. I have the specifications in my office safe: essentially, it must be air-conditioned, burglar-proof, and strong enough to withstand all natural hazards."

"Whoa, there!" Herries stepped forward. "That's going to take reinforced concrete and—"

"Materials will be made available," said Symonds. He did not look at the other man but stared straight ahead of him, across the rain-smoky compound to the jungle. He had no expression on his pinched face, and the reflection of light off his glasses gave him a strangely blind look.

"But – Judas priest!" Herries threw his cigaret to the ground; it was swallowed in mud and running water. He felt the heat enfold him like a blanket. "There's the labor too, the machinery, and – How the devil am I expected to expand this operation if—"

"Expansion will be temporarily halted," cut in Symonds. "You will simply maintain current operations with skeleton crews. The majority of the labor force is to be reassigned to construction."

"*What?*"

"The compound fence must be extended and reinforced. A number of new storehouses are to be erected, to hold certain supplies which will presently be sent to us. Bunkhouse barges for an additional five hundred are required.

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This, of course, entails more sick-bay, recreational, mess, laundry, and other facilities."

Herries stood dumbly, staring at him. Pale lightning flickered in the sky.

The worst of it was, Symonds didn't even bother to be arrogant. He spoke like a schoolmaster.

"Oh, no!" whispered Herries after a long while. "They're not going to try to established that Jurassic military base after all!"

"The purpose is classified."

"Yeah. Sure. Classified. Arise, ye duly cleared citizens of democracy, and cast your ballot on issues whose nature is classified, that your leaders whose names and duties are classified may—Great. Hopping. Balls. Of. Muck." Herries swallowed. Vaguely, through his pulse, he felt his fingers tighten into fists.

"I'm going up," he said. "I'm going to protest personally in Washington."

"That is not permitted," Symonds said in a dry, clipped tone. "Read your contract. You are under martial law. Of course," and his tone was neither softer nor harder, "you may file a written recommendation."

Herries stood for a while. Out beyond the fence stood a bulldozer wrecked and abandoned. The vines had almost buried it and a few scuttering little marsupials lived there. Perhaps they were his own remote ancestors. He could take a .22 and go potshotting at them some day.

"I'm not permitted to know anything," he said at last. "But is curiosity allowed? An extra five hundred men aren't much. I suppose, given a few airplanes and so on, a thousand of us could plant atomic bombs where enemy cities will be. Or could we? Can't locate them without astronomical studies first, and it's always clouded here. So it would be practical to boobytrap only with mass-action weapons. A few husky cobalt bombs, say. But there are missiles available to deliver those in the twentieth century. So . . . what *is* the purpose?"

"You will learn the facts in due course," answered Symonds. "At present, the government has certain military necessities."

"Haw!" said Herries. He folded his arms and leaned against the roofpost. It sagged a bit . . . shoddy work, shoddy world, shoddy destiny. "Military horses' necks! I'd like to get one of those prawn-eyed brass hats down here, just for a week, to run his precious security check on a lovesick brontosaur. But I'll probably get another visit from Senator Lardhead, the one who took up two days of my time walking around asking about the possibilities of farming. *Farming!*"

"Senator Wien is from an agricultural state. Naturally he would be interested —"

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"— in making sure that nobody here starts raising food and shipping it back home to bring grocery prices down to where people can afford an occasional steak. Sure. I'll bet it cost us a thousand man-hours to make his soil tests and tell him, yes, given the proper machinery this land could be farmed. Of course, maybe I do him an injustice. Senator Wien is also on the Military Affairs Committee, isn't he? He may have visited us in that capacity, and soon we'll all get a directive to start our own little Victory gardens."

"Your language is close to being subversive," declared Symonds out of prune-wrinkled lips. "Senator Wien is a famous statesman."

For a moment the legislator's face rose in Herries' memory; and it had been the oldest and most weary face he had ever known. Something had burned out in the man who had fought a decade for honorable peace; the knowledge that there was no peace and could be none became a kind of death, and Senator Wien dropped out of his Free World Union organization to arm his land for Ragnarok. Briefly, his anger fading, Herries pitied Senator Wien. And the President, and the Chief of Staff, and the Secretary of State, for their work must be like a nightmare where you strangled your mother and could not stop your hands. It was easier to fight dinosaurs.

He even pitied Symonds, until he asked if his request for an atomic weapon had finally been okayed, and Symonds replied, "Certainly not." Then he spat at the clerk's feet and walked out into the rain.

After the shipment and guards were seen to, Herries dismissed his men. There was an uneasy buzz among them at the abnormality of what had arrived; but today was mail day, after all, and they did not ponder it long. He would not make the announcement about the new orders until tomorrow. He got the magazines and newspapers to which he subscribed (no one up there "now" cared enough to write to him, though his parents had existed in a section of spacetime which ended only a year before he took this job) and wandered off to the boss barge to read a little.

The twentieth century looked still uglier than it had last month. The nations felt their pride and saw no way of retreat. The Middle Eastern war was taking a decisive turn which none of the great powers could afford. Herries wondered if he might not be cut off in the Jurassic. A single explosion could destroy the main projector. Five hundred womanless men in a world of reptiles—he'd take the future, cobalt bomb and all.

After lunch there was a quiet,

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Sunday kind of atmosphere, men lay on their bunks reading their letters over and over. Herries made his rounds, machines and kitchen and sickbay, inspecting.

"I guess we'll discharge O'Connor tomorrow," said Dr. Yamaguchi. "He can do light work with that Stader on his arm. Next time tell him to duck when a power shovel comes down."

"What kind of sick calls have you been getting?" asked the chief.

Yamaguchi shrugged. "Usual things, very minor. I'd never have thought this swamp country would be so healthful. I guess disease germs which can live on placental mammals haven't evolved yet."

Father Gonzales, one of the camp's three chaplains, buttonholed Herries as he came out. "Can you spare me a minute?" he said.

"Sure, padre. What is it?"

"About organizing some baseball teams. We need more recreation. This is not a good place for men to live."

"Sawbones was just telling me —"

"I know. No flu, no malaria, oh, yes. But man is more than a body."

"Sometimes I wonder," said Herries. "I've seen the latest headlines. The dinosaurs have more sense than we do."

"We have the capacity to do nearly all things," said Father Gonzales. "At present, I mean in the twentieth century, we seem to do evil very well. We can do as much good, given the chance."

"Who's denying us the chance?" asked Herries. "Just ourselves, H. Sapiens. Therefore I wonder if we really are able to do good."

"Don't confuse sinfulness with damnation," said the priest. "We have perhaps been unfortunate in our successes. And yet even our most menacing accomplishments have a kind of sublimity. The time projector, for example. If the minds able to shape such a thing in metal were only turned toward human problems, what could we not hope to do?"

"But that's my point," said Herries. "We don't do the high things. We do what's trivial and evil so consistently that I wonder if it isn't in our nature. Even this time travel business . . . more and more I'm coming to think there's something fundamentally unhealthy about it. As if it's an invention which only an ingrown mind would have made first."

"First?"

Herries looked up into the steaming sky. A foul wind met his face. "There are stars above those clouds," he said, "and most stars must have planets. I've not been told how the time projector works, but elementary differential calculus will show that travel into the past is equivalent to at-

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taining, momentarily, an infinite velocity. In other words, the basic natural law which the projector uses is one which somehow goes beyond relativity theory. If a time projector is possible, so is a spaceship which can reach the stars in a matter of days, maybe of minutes or seconds. If we were sane, padre, we wouldn't have been so anxious for a little organic grease and the little military advantage involved, that the first thing we did was go back into the dead past after it. No, we'd have invented that spaceship first, and gone out to the stars where there's room to be free and to grow. The time projector would have come afterward, as a scientific research tool."

He stopped, embarrassed at himself and trying awkwardly to grin. "Excuse me. Sermons are more your province than mine."

"It was interesting," said Father Gonzales. "But you brood too much. So do a number of the men. Even if they have no close ties at home—it was wise to pick them for that—they are all of above-average intelligence, and aware of what the future is becoming. I'd like to shake them out of their oppression. If we could get some more sports equipment—"

"Sure. I'll see what I can do."

"Of course," said the priest, "the problem is basically philosophical. Don't laugh. You too were indulging in philosophy, and doubtless you think of yourself as an ordinary, unimaginative man. Your wildcatters may not have heard of Aristotle, but they are also thinking men in their way. My personal belief is that this heresy of a fixed, rigid time line lies at the root of their growing sorrowfulness, whether they know it or not."

"Heresy?" The engineer lifted thick sandy brows. "It's been proved. It's the basis of the theory which showed how to build a projector: that much I do know. How could we be here at all, if the Mesozoic were not just as real as the Cenozoic? But if all time is coexistent, then all time must be fixed — unalterable—because every instant is the unchanging past of some other instant."

"Perhaps so, from God's viewpoint," said Father Gonzales. "But we are mortal men. And we have free will. The fixed-time concept need not, logically, produce fatalism; after all, Herries, man's will is itself one of the links in the causal chain. I suspect that this irrational fatalism is an important reason why twentieth-century civilization is approaching suicide. If we think we know our future is unchangeable, if our every action is foreordained, if we are doomed already, what's the use of trying? Why go through all the pain of thought, of seeking an answer and

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struggling to make others accept it? But if we really believed in ourselves, we would look for a solution, and find one."

"Maybe," said Herries uncomfortably. "Well, give me a list of the equipment you want, and I'll put in an order for it the next time the mail goes out."

As he walked off, he wondered if the mail would ever go out again.

Passing the rec hall, he noticed a small crowd before it and veered to see what was going on. He could not let men gather to trade doubts and terrors, or the entire operation was threatened. *In plain English,* he told himself with a growing bitter honesty, *I can't permit them to think.*

But the sounds which met him, under the subtly alien rustle of forest leaves and the distant bawl of a thunder lizard, was only a guitar. Chords danced forth beneath expert fingers, and a young voice lilted:

". . . I traveled this wide world over,
A hundred miles or more,
But a saddle on a milk cow,
I never seen before! . . ."

Looking over shoulders, Herries made out Greenstein, sprawled on a bench and singing. There were chuckles from the listeners. Well-deserved: the kid was good; Herries wished he could relax and simply enjoy the performance. Instead, he must note that they were finding it pleasant, and that swamp and war were alike forgotten for a valuable few minutes.

The song ended. Greenstein stood up and stretched. "Hi, boss," he said.

Hard, wind-beaten faces turned to Herries and a mumble of greeting went around the circle. He was well enough liked, he knew, insofar as a chief can be liked. But that is not much. A leader can inspire trust, loyalty, what have you, but he cannot be humanly liked, or he is no leader.

"That was good," said Herries. "I didn't know you played."

"I didn't bring this whangbox with me, since I had no idea where I was going till I got here," answered Greenstein. "Wrote home for it and it arrived today."

A heavy-muscled crewcut man said, "You ought to be on the entertainment committee." Herries recognized Worth, one of the professional patriots who would be standing guard on Symonds' crates; but not a bad sort, really, after you learned to ignore his rather tedious opinions.

Greenstein said an indelicate word. "I'm sick of committees," he went on. "We've gotten so much into the habit of being herded around—everybody in the twentieth century has—that we can't even have a little fun without first setting up a committee."

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Worth looked offended but made no answer. It began to rain again, just a little.

"Go on now, anyway," said Joe Eagle Wing. "Let's not take ourselves so goddam serious. How about another song?"

"Not in the wet." Greenstein returned his guitar to its case. The group began to break up, some to the hall and some back toward their barges.

Herries lingered, unwilling to be left alone with himself. "About that committee," he said. "You might reconsider. It's probably true what you claim, but we're stuck with a situation. We've simply got to tell most of the boys, 'Now it is time to be happy,' or they never will be."

Greenstein frowned. "Maybe so. But hasn't anyone ever thought of making a fresh start? Of unlearning all those bad habits?"

"You can't do that within the context of an entire society's vices," said Herries. "And how're you going to get away?"

Greenstein gave him a long look. "How the devil did you ever get this job?" he asked. "You don't sound like a man who'd be cleared for a dishwashing assistantship."

Herries shrugged. "All my life, I've liked totalitarianism even less than what passes for democracy. I served in a couple of the minor wars and— No matter. Possibly I might not be given the post if I applied now. I've been here more than a year, and it's changed me some."

"It must," said Greenstein, flickering a glance at the jungle.

"How's things at home?" asked Herries, anxious for another subject.

The boy kindled. "Oh, terrific!" he said eagerly. "Miriam, my girl, you know, she's an artist, and she's gotten a commission to—"

The loudspeaker coughed and blared across the compound, into the strengthening rain: "Attention! Copter to ground, attention! Large biped dinosaur, about two miles away north-northeast, coming fast."

Herries cursed and broke into a run.

Greenstein paced him. Water sheeted where their boots struck. "What is it?" he called.

"I don't know . . . yet . . . but it might be . . . a really big . . . carnivore." Herries reached the headquarters shack and flung the door open. A panel of levers was set near his personal desk. He slapped one down and the "combat stations" siren skirted above the field. Herries went on, "I don't know why anything biped should make a beeline for us unless the smell of blood from the critter we drove off yesterday attracts it. The smaller carnivores are sure as hell drawn. The charged fence keeps them away—but I doubt if it would do much more than en-

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rage a dinosaur — Follow me!"

Jeeps were already leaving their garage when Herries and Greenstein came out. Mud leaped up from their wheels and dripped back off the fenders. The rain fell harder, until the forest beyond the fence blurred; and the earth smoked with vapors. The helicopter hung above the derricks, like a skeleton vulture watching a skeleton army, and the alarm sirens filled the brown air with screaming.

"Can you drive one of these buggies?" asked Herries.

"I did in the Army," said Greenstein.

"Okay, we'll take the lead one. The main thing is to stop that beast before it gets in among the wells." Herries vaulted the right-hand door and planted himself on sopping plastic cushions. There was a .50-caliber machine gun mounted on the hood before him, and the microphone of a police-car radio hung at the dash. Five jeeps followed as Greenstein swung into motion. The rest of the crew, ludicrous ants across these wide wet distances, went scurrying with their arms to defend the most vital installations.

The north gate opened and the cars splashed out beyond the fence. There was a strip several yards across, also kept cleared; then the jungle wall rose, black, brown, dull red, and green and yellow. Here and there along the fence an occasional bone gleamed up out of the muck, some animal shot by a guard or killed by the voltage. Oddly enough, Herries irrelevantly remembered, such a corpse drew enough scavenging insects to clean it in a day, but it was usually ignored by the nasty man-sized hunter dinosaurs which still slunk and hopped and slithered in this neighborhood. Reptiles just did not go in for carrion. However, they followed the odor of blood. . . .

"Further east," said the helicopter pilot's radio voice. "There. Stop. Face the woods. He's coming out in a minute. Good luck, boss. Next time gimme some bombs and I'll handle the bugger myself."

"We haven't been granted any heavy weapons." Herries licked lips which seemed rough. His pulse was thick. No one had ever faced a tyrannosaur before.

The jeeps drew into line, and for a moment only their windshield wipers had motion. Then undergrowth crashed, and the monster was upon them.

It was indeed a tyrannosaur, thought Herries in a blurred way. A close relative, at least. It blundered ahead with the overweighted, underwitted stiffness which paleontologists had predicted, and which had led some of them to believe that it must have been a gigantic, carrion-eating hyena! They forgot that, like

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the Cenozoic snake or crocodile, it was too dull to recognize dead meat as food; that the brontosaurs it preyed on were even more clumsy; and that sheer length of stride would carry it over the scarred earth at a respectable rate.

Herries saw a blunt head three man-heights above ground, and a tail ending fifteen yards away. Scales of an unfairly beautiful steel gray shimmered in the rain, which made small waterfalls off flanks and wrinkled neck and tiny useless forepaws. Teeth clashed in a mindless reflex, the ponderous belly wagged with each step, and Herries felt the vibration of tons coming down claw-footed. The beast paid no attention to the jeeps, but moved jerkily toward the fence. Sheer weight would drive it through the mesh.

"Get in front of him, Sam!" yelled the engineer.

He gripped the machine gun. It snarled on his behalf, and he saw how a sleet of bullets stitched a bloody seam across the white stomach. The tyrannosaur halted, weaving its head about. It made a hollow, coughing roar. Greenstein edged the jeep closer.

The others attacked from the sides. Tracer streams hosed across alligator tail and bird legs. A launched grenade burst with a little puff on the right thigh. It opened a red ulcer-like crater. The tyrannosaur swung slowly about toward one of the cars.

That jeep dodged aside. "Get in on him!" shouted Herries. Greenstein shifted gears and darted through a fountain of mud. Herries stole a glance. The boy was grinning. Well, it would be something to tell the grandchildren, all right!

His jeep fled past the tyrannosaur, whipped about on two wheels, and crouched under a hammer of rain. The reptile halted. Herries cut loose with his machine gun. The monster standing there, swaying a little, roaring and bleeding, was not entirely real. This had happened a hundred million years ago. Rain struck the hot gun barrel and sizzled off.

"From the sides again," rapped Herries into his microphone. "Two and Three on his right, Four and Five on his left. Six, go behind him and lob a grenade at the base of his tail."

The tyrannosaur began another awkward about face. The water in which it stood was tinged red.

"Aim for his eyes!" yelled Greenstein, and dashed recklessly toward the profile now presented him.

The grenade from behind exploded. With a sudden incredible speed, the tyrannosaur turned clear around. Herries had an instant's glimpse of the tail like a snake before him, then it struck.

He threw up an arm and felt

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glass bounce off it as the windshield shattered. The noise when metal gave way did not seem loud, but it went through his entire body. The jeep reeled on ahead. Instinct sent Herries to the floorboards. He felt a brutal impact as his car struck the dinosaur's left leg. It hooted far above him. He looked up and saw a foot with talons, raised and filling the sky. It came down. The hood crumpled at his back and the engine was ripped from the frame.

Then the tyrannosaur had gone on. Herries crawled up into the bucket seat. It was canted at a lunatic angle. "Sam," he croaked. "Sam, Sam."

Greenstein's head was brains and splinters, with half the lower jaw on his lap and a burst-out eyeball staring up from the seat beside him.

Herries climbed erect. He saw his torn-off machine gun lying in the mud. A hundred yards off, at the jungle edge, the tyrannosaur fought the jeeps. It made clumsy rushes, which they sideswerved, and they spat at it and gnawed at it. Herries thought in a dull, remote fashion: *This can go on forever. A man is easy to kill, one swipe of a tail and all his songs are a red smear in the rain. But a reptile dies hard, being less alive to start with. I can't see an end to this fight.*

The Number Four jeep rushed in. A man sprang from it and it darted back in reverse from the monster's charge. The man—"Stop that, you idiot," whispered Herries into a dead microphone, "stop it, you fool"—plunged between the huge legs. He moved sluggishly enough with clay on his boots, but he was impossibly fleet and beautiful under that jerking bulk. Herries recognized Worth. He carried a grenade in his hand. He pulled the pin and dodged claws for a moment. The flabby, bleeding stomach made a roof over his head. Jaws searched blindly above him. He hurled the grenade and ran. It exploded against the tyrannosaur's belly. The monster screamed. One foot rose and came down. The talons merely clipped Worth, but he went spinning, fell in the gumbo ten feet away and tried weakly to rise but couldn't.

The tyrannosaur staggered in the other direction, spilling its entrails. Its screams took on a ghastly human note. Somebody stopped and picked up Worth. Somebody else came to Herries and gabbled at him. The tyrannosaur stumbled in yards of gut, fell slowly, and struggled, entangling itself.

Even so, it was hard to kill. The cars battered it for half an hour as it lay there, and it hissed at them and beat the ground with its tail. Herries was not sure it had died when he and his men

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finally left. But the insects had long been busy, and a few of the bones already stood forth clean white.

The phone jangled on Herries' desk. He picked it up. "Yeh?"

"Yamaguchi in sickbay," said the voice. "Thought you'd want to know about Worth."

"Well?"

"Broken lumbar vertebra. He'll live, possibly without permanent paralysis, but he'll have to go back for treatment."

"And be held incommunicado a year, till his contract's up. I wonder how much of a patriot he'll be by that time."

"What?"

"Nothing. Can it wait till tomorrow? Everything's so disorganized right now, I'd hate to activate the projector."

"Oh, yes. He's under sedation anyway." Yamaguchi paused. "And the man who died—"

"Sure. We'll ship him back too. The government will even supply a nice coffin. I'm sure his girl friend will appreciate that."

"Do you feel well?" asked Yamaguchi sharply.

"They were going to be married," said Herries. He took another pull from the fifth of bourbon on his desk. It was getting almost too dark to see the bottle. "Since patriotism nowadays . . . in the future, I mean . . . in our own home, sweet home . . . since patriotism is necessarily equated with necrophilia, in that the loyal citizen is expected to rejoice every time his government comes up with a newer gadget for mass-producing corpses . . . I am sure the young lady will just love to have a pretty coffin. So much nicer than a mere husband. I'm sure the coffin will be chrome plated."

"Wait a minute—"

"With tail fins."

"Look here," said the doctor, "you're acting like a case of combat fatigue. I know you've had a shock today. Come see me and I'll give you a tranquilizer."

"Thanks," said Herries. "I've got one." He took another swig and forced briskness into his tone. "We'll send 'em back tomorrow morning, then. Now don't bother me. I'm composing a letter to explain to the great white father that this wouldn't have happened if we'd been allowed one stinking little atomic howitzer. Not that I expect to get any results. It's policy that we aren't allowed heavy weapons down here, and who ever heard of facts affecting a policy? Why, facts might be un-American."

He hung up, put the bottle on his lap and his feet on the desk, lit a cigarette and stared out the window. Darkness came sneaking across the compound like smoke. The rain had stopped for a while, and lamps and windows threw broken yellow gleams off puddles,

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but somehow the gathering night was so thick that each light seemed quite alone. There was no one else in the headquarters shack at this hour. Herries had not turned on his own lights.

To hell with it, he thought. *To hell with it.*

His cigarette tip waxed and waned as he puffed, like a small dying star. But the smoke didn't taste right when invisible. Or had he put away so many toasts to dead men that his tongue was numbed? He wasn't sure. It hardly mattered.

The phone shrilled again. He picked it up, fumble-handed in the murk. "Chief of operations," he said pleasantly. "To hell with *you.*"

"What?" Symonds' voice rattled a bare bit. Then: "I have been trying to find you. What are you doing there this late?"

"I'll give you three guesses. Playing pinochle? No. Carrying on a sordid affair with a lady iguanodon? No. None of your business? Right! *Give* that gentleman a box of see-gars."

"Look here, Mr. Herries," wasped Symonds, "this is no time for levity. I understand that Matthew Worth was seriously injured today. He was supposed to be on guard duty tonight—the secret shipment. This has disarranged all my plans."

"Tsk-tsk-tsk. My nose bleeds for you."

"The schedule of duties must be revised. According to my notes, Worth would have been on guard from midnight until 4 A.M. Since I do not know precisely what other jobs his fellows are assigned to, I cannot single any one of them out to replace him. Will you do so? Select a man who can then sleep later tomorrow morning?"

"Why?" asked Herries.

"Why? Because—because—"

"I know. Because Washington said so. Washington is afraid some nasty dinosaur from what is going to be Russia will sneak in and look at an unguarded crate and hurry home with the information. Sure, I'll do it. I just wanted to hear you sputter."

Herries thought he made out an indignant breath sucked past an upper plate. "Very good," said the clerk. "Make the necessary arrangements for tonight, and we will work out a new rotation of watches tomorrow."

Herries put the receiver back.

The list of tight-lipped, tight-minded types was somewhere in his desk, he knew vaguely. A copy, rather. Symonds had a copy, and no doubt there would be copies going to the Pentagon and the FBI and the Transoco personnel office and— Well, look at the list, compare it with the work schedule, see who wouldn't be doing anything of critical importance tomorrow forenoon, and put him

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on a bit of sentry-go. Simple.

Herries took another swig. He could resign, he thought. He could back out of the whole fantastically stupid, fantastically meaningless operation. He wasn't compelled to work. Of course, they could hold him for the rest of his contract. It would be a lonesome year. Or maybe not; maybe a few others would trickle in to keep him company. To be sure, he'd then be under surveillance the rest of his life. But who wasn't, in a century divided between two garrisons?

The trouble was, he thought, there was nothing a man could do about the situation. You could become a peace-at-any-cost pacifist and thereby, effectively, league yourself with the enemy; and the enemy had carried out too many cold massacres for any halfway sane man to stomach. Or you could fight back (thus becoming more and more like what you fought) and hazard planetary incineration against the possibility of a tolerable outcome. It only took one to make a quarrel, and the enemy had long ago elected himself that one. Now, it was probably too late to patch up the quarrel. Even if important men on both sides wished for a disengagement, what could they do against their own fanatics, vested interests, terrified common people . . . against the whole momentum of history?

Hell take it, thought Herries, *we may be damned but why must we be fools into the bargain?*

Somewhere a brontosaur hooted, witlessly plowing through a night swamp.

Well, I'd better—No!

Herries stared at the end of his cigarette. It was almost scorching his fingers. At least, he thought, at least he could find out what he was supposed to condone. A look into those crates, which should have held the guns he had begged for, and perhaps some orchestral and scientific instruments . . . and instead held God knew what piece of Pentagonal-brained idiocy . . . a look would be more than a blow in Symonds' smug eye. It would be an assertion that he was Herries, a free man, whose existence had not yet been pointlessly spilled from a splintered skull. He, the individual, would know what the Team planned; and if it turned out to be a crime against reason, he could at the very least resign and sit out whatever followed.

Yes. By the dubious existence of divine mercy, yes.

Again a little rain, just a small warm touch on his face, like tears. Herries splashed to the transceiver building and stood quietly in the sudden flashlight glare. At last, out of blackness, the sentry's voice came: "Oh, it's you, sir."

"Uh-huh. You know Worth got

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hurt today? I'm taking his watch."

"What? But I thought—"

"Policy," said Herries.

The incantation seemed to suffice. The other man shuffled forth and laid his rifle in the engineer's hands. "And here's the glim," he added. "Nobody came by while I was on duty."

"What would you have done if somebody'd tried to get in?"

"Why, stopped them, of course."

"And if they didn't stop?"

The dim face under the dripping hat turned puzzledly toward Herries. The engineer sighed. "I'm sorry, Thornton. It's too late to raise philosophical questions. Run along to bed."

He stood in front of the door, smoking a damp cigarette, and watched the man trudge away. All the lights were out now, except overhead lamps here and there. They were brilliant, but remote; he stood in a pit of shadow and wondered what the phase of the Moon was and what kind of constellations the stars made nowadays.

He waited. There was time enough for his rebellion. Too much time, really. A man stood in rain, fog about his feet and a reptile smell in his nose, and he remembered anemones in springtime, strewn under trees still cold and leafless, with here and there a little snow between the roots. Or he remembered drinking beer in a New England country inn one fall day, when the door stood open to red sumac and yellow beech and a far blue wandering sky. Or he remembered a man snatched under black Jurassic quagmires, a man stepped into red ruin, a man sitting in a jeep and bleeding brains down onto the picture of the girl he had planned to marry. And then he started wondering what the point of it all was, and decided that it was either without any point whatsoever or else had the purpose of obliterating anemones and quiet country inns, and he was forced to dissent somehow.

When Thornton's wet footsteps were lost in the dark, Herries unlocked the shed door and went through. It was smotheringly hot inside. Sweat sprang forth under his raincoat as he closed the door again and turned on his flashlight. Rain tapped loudly on the roof. The crates loomed over him, box upon box, many of them large enough to hold a dinosaur. It had taken a lot of power to ship all that tonnage into the past. No wonder taxes were high. And what might the stuff be? A herd of tanks, possibly . . . some knocked-down bombers . . . Lord knew what concept the men who lived in offices, insulated from the sky, would come up with. And Symonds had implied it was just a beginning; there would be

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more shipments when this had been stored out of the way, and more, and more.

Herries found a workbench and helped himself to tools. He would have to be careful; no sense in going to jail. He laid the flashlight on a handy barrel and stooped down by one of the crates. It was of strong wood, securely screwed together. But while that would make it harder to dismantle, it could be reassembled without leaving a trace. Maybe. Of course, it might be booby trapped. No telling how far the religion of secrecy could lead the office men.

Oh, well, if I'm blown up I haven't lost much. Herries peeled off his slicker. His shirt clung to his body. He squatted and began to work.

It went slowly. After taking off several boards, he saw a regular manufacturer's crate, open-slatted. Something within was wrapped in burlap. A single curved metal surface projected slightly. What the devil? Herries got a crowbar and pried one slat loose. The nails shrieked. He stooped rigid for a while, listening, but there was only the rain, grown more noisy. He reached in and fumbled with the padding. . . . God, it was hot!

Only when he had freed the entire blade did he recognize what it was. And then his mind would not quite function; he gaped a long while before the word registered.

A plowshare.

"But they don't know what to do with the farm surpluses at home," he said aloud, inanely.

Like a stranger's, his hands began to repair what he had torn apart. He couldn't understand it. Nothing seemed altogether real any more. Of course, he thought in a dim way, theoretically anything might be in the other boxes, but he suspected more plows, tractors, discs, combines . . . why not bags of seeds . . .? *What were they planning to do?*

"Ah."

Herries whirled. The flashlight beam caught him like a spear.

He grabbed blindly for his rifle. A dry little voice behind the blaze said: "I would not recommend violence." Herries let the rifle fall. It thudded.

Symonds closed the shed door behind him and stepped forward in his mincing fashion, another shadow among bobbing misshapen shadows. He had simply flung on shirt and pants, but bands of night across them suggested necktie, vest, and coat.

"You see," he explained without passion, "all the guards were instructed *sub rosa* to notify me if there was anything unusual, even when it did not seem to warrant action on their part." He gestured at the crate. "Please continue reassembling it."

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Herries crouched down again. There was a hollowness in him, his only wonder was how best to die. For if he were sent back to the twentieth century, surely, surely they would lock him up and lose the key, and the sunlessness of death was better than that. It was strange, he thought, how his fingers used the tools with untrembling skill.

Symonds stood behind him and held his light on the work. After a long while he asked primly, "Why did you break in like this?"

I could kill him, thought Herries. *He's unarmed. I could wring his scrawny neck between these two hands, and take a gun, and go into the swamp to live a few days. . . . But it might be easier all around just to turn the rifle on myself.*

He sought words with care, for he must decide what to do, even though it seemed remote and scarcely important. "That's not an easy question to answer," he said.

"The significant ones never are."

Astonished, Herries jerked a glance upward and back. (And was the more surprised that he could still know surprise.) But the little man's face was in darkness. Herries saw only a wan blank glitter off the glasses.

He said, "Let's put it this way. There are limits even to the right of self-defense. If a killer attacks me, I can fight back with anything I've got. But I wouldn't be justified in grabbing some passing child for a shield."

"So you wished to make sure that nothing you would consider illegitimate was in those boxes?" asked Symonds academically.

"I don't know. What is illegitimate, these days? I was . . . I was disgusted. I liked Greenstein, and he died because Washington had decided we couldn't have bombs or atomic shells. I just didn't know how much more I could consent to. I had to find out."

"I see." The clerk nodded. "For your information, it is *all* agricultural equipment. Later shipments will include industrial and scientific material, a large reserve of canned food, and as much of the world's culture as it proves possible to microfilm."

Herries stopped working, turned around and rose. His knees would not hold him. He leaned against the crate and it was a minute before he could get out: "Why?"

Symonds did not respond at once. He reached forth a precise hand and took up the flashlight Herries had left on the barrel. Then he sat down there himself, with the two glowing tubes in his lap. The light from below ridged his face in shadows, and his glasses made blind circles. He said, as if ticking off the points of an agenda:

"You would have been in-

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formed of the facts in due course, when the next five hundred people arrive. Now you have brought on yourself the burden of knowing what you would otherwise have been ignorant of for months yet. I think it may safely be assumed that you will keep the secret and not be broken by it. At least, the assumption is necessary."

Herries heard his own breath harsh in his throat. "Who are these people?"

The papery half-seen countenance did not look at him, but into the pit-like reaches of the shed. "You have committed a common error," said Symonds, as if to a student. "You have assumed that because men are constrained by circumstances to act in certain ways, they must be evil or stupid. I assure you, Senator Wien and the few others responsible for this are neither. They must keep the truth even from those officials within the project whose reaction would be rage or panic instead of a sober attempt at salvage. Nor do they have unlimited powers. Therefore, rather than indulge in tantrums about the existing situation, they use it. The very compartmentalization of effort and knowledge enforced by Security helps conceal their purposes and mislead those who must be given some information."

Symonds paused. A little frown crossed his forehead, and he tapped an impatient fingernail on a flashlight casing. "Do not misunderstand," he went on. "Senator Wien and his associates have not forgotten their oaths of office, nor are they trying to play God. Their primary effort goes, as it must, to a straightforward dealing with the problems of the twentieth century. It is not they who are withholding the one significant datum—a datum which, incidentally, any informed person could reason out for himself if he cared to. It is properly constituted authority, using powers legally granted to stamp certain reports Top Secret. Of course, the Senator has used his considerable influence to bring about the present eventuality, but that is normal politics."

Herries growled: "Get to the point, damn you! What are you talking about?"

Symonds shook his thin gray head. "You are afraid to know, are you not?" he asked quietly.

"I—" Herries turned about, faced the crate and beat it with his fist. The parched voice in the night continued to punish him:

"You know that a time-projector can go into the future about a hundred years at a jump, but can only go pastward in jumps of approximately one hundred megayears. You have spoken of a simple way to explore certain sections of the historical past, in spite of this handicap, by making enough century hops forward be-

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fore the one long hop backward. But can you tell me how to predict the historical future? Say, a century hence? Come, come, you are an intelligent man. Answer me."

"Yeah," said Herries. "I get the idea. Leave me alone."

"Team A, a group of well-equipped volunteers, went into the twenty-first century," pursued Symonds. "They recorded what they observed and placed the data in a chemically inert box within a large block of reinforced concrete erected at an agreed-on location: one which a previous expedition to circa 100,000,000 A.D. had confirmed would remain stable. I presume they also mixed radioactive materials of long half-life into the concrete, to aid in finding the site. Of course, the bracketing of time jumps is such that they cannot now get back to the twentieth century. But Team B went a full hundred-megayear jump into the future, exacavated the data, and returned home."

Herries squared his body and faced back to the small man. He was drained, so weary that it was all he could do to keep on his feet. "What did they find?" he asked. There was no tone in his voice or in him.

"There have actually been several expeditions to 100,000,000," said Symonds. "Energy requirements for a visit to 200,000,000—A.D. or B.C.—were considered prohibitive. But in 100,000,000, life is re-evolving on Earth. However, as yet the plants have not liberated enough oxygen for the atmosphere to be breathable. You see, oxygen reacts with exposed rock, so that if no biological processes exist to replace it continuously—But you have a better technical education than I."

"Okay," said Herries, flat and hard. "Earth was sterile for a long time in the future. Including the twenty-first century?"

"Yes. The radioactivity had died down enough so that Team A reported no danger to itself, but some of the longer-lived isotopes were still measurably present. By making differential measments of abundance, Team A was able to estimate rather closely when the bombs had gone off."

"And?"

"Approximately one year from the twentieth-century base date we are presently using."

"One year . . . from now." Herries stared upward. Blackness met him. He heard the Jurassic rain on the iron roof, like drums.

"Possibly less," Symonds told him. "There is a factor of uncertainty. This project must be completed well within the safety margin before the war comes."

"The war comes," Herries repeated. . . . "Does it have to come? Fixed time line or not, does it have to come? Couldn't the enemy leaders be shown the facts

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—couldn't our side, even, capitulate—"

"Every effort is being made," said Symonds like a machine. "Quite apart from the theory of rigid time, it seems unlikely that they will succeed. The situation is too unstable. One man, losing his head and pressing the wrong button, can write the end; and there are so many buttons. The very revelation of the truth, to a few chosen leaders or to the world public, would make some of them panicky. Who can tell what a man in panic will do? That is what I meant when I said that Senator Wien and his co-workers have not forgotten their oaths of office. They have no thought of taking refuge, they know they are old men. To the end, they will try to save the twentieth century. But they do not expect it; so they are also trying to save the human race."

Herries pushed up from the crate he had been leaning against. "Those five hundred who're coming," he whispered. "Women?"

"Yes. If there is still time to rescue a few more, after the ones you are preparing for have gone through, it will be done. But there will be at least a thousand young, healthy adults here, in the Jurassic. You face a difficult time, when the truth must be told them; you can see why the secret must be kept until then. It is quite possible that someone here will lose his head. That is why no heavy weapons have been sent: a single deranged person must not be able to destroy everyone. But *you* will recover. You must."

Herries jerked the door open and stared out into the roaring darkness. "But there are no traces of us . . . in the future," he said, hearing his voice high and hurt like a child's.

"How much trace do you expect would remain after geological eras?" answered Symonds. He was still the reproving schoolmaster; but he sat on the barrel and faced the great moving shadows in a corner. "It is assumed that you will remain here for several generations, until your numbers and resources have been expanded sufficiently. The Team A I spoke of will join you a century hence. It is also, I might add, composed of young men and women in equal numbers. But this planet in this age is not a good home. We trust that your descendants will perfect the spaceships we know to be possible, and take possession of the stars instead."

Herries leaned in the doorway, sagging with tiredness and the monstrous duty to survive. A gust of wind threw rain into his eyes. He heard dragons calling in the night.

"And you?" he said, for no good reason.

"I shall convey any final mes-

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sages you may wish to send home," said the dried-out voice.

Neat little footsteps clicked across the floor until the clerk paused beside the engineer. There was silence, except for the rain.

"Surely I will deserve to go home," said Symonds.

And suddenly the breath whistled inward between teeth which had snapped together. He raised his hands, claw-fingered, and screamed aloud: "You can let me go home *then!*"

He began running toward the supervisors' barge. The sound of him was soon lost. Herries stood for a time yet in the door.

Note on the future . . .

Two more Poul Anderson novelets are coming along shortly . . .

Brave to Be a King — *a Time Patrol story, in which a routine check on migrations in ancient Persia leads to astonishing complications in B. C. royal circles, as well as some dismay on two sides of a 20th Century triangle . . .*

The Sky People — *a rousing tale of high and salty adventure, when a great aerial power of the reviving future meets an ingenious naval force from half way around an otherwise peaceful world. . . .*

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Recommended Reading

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

WITH THE NEWEST HEINLEIN NOVEL just concluded here, it's a pleasure to read or reread older Heinlein works and realize what consistently high standards Robert A. Heinlein has set for two full decades – standards, indeed, that only he himself has lived up to with any great frequency.

METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN (Gnome, $3) is both old and new Heinlein. This is the first publication in book form of the 1941 *Astounding* serial, one of the highpoints of the "Future History" series; and the story has now been expanded by almost a third—to its great improvement, particularly in the originally sketchy closing sequence. Old-line fans will recall the story of the long-lived race that is mendelianly bred from normal human stock, its conflicts with the rest of humanity which insists that there must be a divulgeable "secret" of long life, and its flight to the stars, strange discoveries and stranger return; and even neophytes have heard (and longed to read) of such Heinlein heroes as the mathematical genius Slipstick Libby or the bicentenarian individualist Lazarus Long. Now you can read this long unavailable highlight of the Golden Age—and, thanks to Heinlein's craftsmanlike revisions, read it with even more pleasure than we found in 1941.

Paperback reprints offer something of a Heinlein festival this season, including SIXTH COLUMN (1941, revised 1949), retitled THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW; THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH (short stories, 1941-48); and THE PUPPET MASTERS (1951), all from Signet (35¢ each); and from Avon, also at 35¢, WALDO: GENIUS IN ORBIT, which contains the 2 short novels, WALDO (1942) and MAGIC, INC. (1940).

No two critics are apt to agree on a strict definition of science fiction; but few will dissent from the statement that, however you wish to frame your definition, the perfect illustrative example is the collected works of Heinlein.

There's no really Heinleinesque s.f. in Judith Merril's SF: THE YEAR'S GREATEST SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY: THIRD ANNUAL VOLUME (Dell, 35¢); but the lack of such detailed thinking about the future in fiction is balanced by a sputnik-inspired section of nonfiction, by Clarke, Ley, Stine and others, which turns out so well

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that similar sections of speculative fact might well become a regular feature of these indispensable annuals.

1957 was not one of s.f.'s great vintage years in magazines; but the fiction selections are—if one overlooks George Langelaan's *The Fly,* which proved so unaccountably popular with readers who know nothing of science fiction (or science) — an enjoyable lot. F&SF is proudly represented by Zenna Henderson and Theodore R. Cogswell, and there are good stories by Rog Phillips (*If*) and George Byram (*Atlantic*); but top honors go to our sister *Venture,* with distinguished entries by Avram Davidson and Algis Budrys.

Budrys, who has in the past been often interesting-but-awkward, seems recently to be hitting his full stride: he has fresh new things to say and has acquired the fictional technique for saying them. Even more impressive than *The Edge of the Sea,* in the Merril anthology, is the book WHO? (Pyramid, 35¢), which seems, at this reasonably late date, one of at most 3 candidates for the title of 1958's best s.f. novel. An injured scientist is repaired by the Russians and sent back as an unrecognizable but miraculous triumph of prosthetics . . . or is he a ringer, and how can Security possibly prove which is the case? This is the dramatic framework; the novelistic body is a realistic examination of the scientist's past life, human, moving, and demonstrating that the title means not the simple *Who is it?* of melodrama but the profound *Who am I?* of man's condition.

The other recent Budrys novel, MAN OF EARTH (Ballantine, 35¢), baffles me. It also deals with the problem of identity (do glandular alterations in the body change the fundamental person?), but I have no idea what it is trying to say or what is the focus of its diffuse plot. Many individual scenes, however, are well and vividly written, and contribute to the general impression of the other works mentioned: that Budrys is a potentially important writer of "straight" fiction who happens to have been serving his apprentice years in s.f.

I am also baffled, I will confess, by Shirley Jackson's THE SUNDIAL (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, $3.75); but in this instance the sensation is, if anything, an agreeable one. This may be the story of the end of the world as seen by a somewhat mad household of great wealth, in which a spinster aunt has been forewarned by her father's spirit that his house alone will be spared. There are more levels of symbolism and interpretation than anyone outside of academic circles can (or should) count; and events are left so imprecise that there's no knowing whether there was a murder just before the rise of the curtain or

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who committed the murder which occurs just before the curtain's fall. But if the form of the whole is deliberately unclear, each character, each scene, each line of dialog or description is written with sparkling clarity, along with great wit and charm. It's a captivating experience to make this tour through the symbology of Miss Jackson's creative subconscious, and not quite like anything else you may have encountered.

This department has frequently recommended the juveniles of Edward Eager as the rightful successors to those of E. Nesbit—books about children, but as satisfactory to adult admirers of true logical fantasy as anything in *Unknown*. The newest, THE TIME GARDEN (Harcourt, Brace, $3), involves another sundial, this one reading "Anything Can Happen When You've All the Time in the World." It stands in a garden near a bank where the wild thyme grows; and time and thyme fuse by understandable sympathetic magic to produce a model of time-fantasy-adventure. This is the concluding story of a tetralogy which is so nicely constructed that you should make sure of reading the volumes in the proper order. The other books (all Harcourt, Brace) are HALF MAGIC (1954), KNIGHT'S CASTLE (1956) and MAGIC BY THE LAKE (1957); and I urge you not to miss a one of them.

Another "juvenile" demanding adult attention is Andre Norton's STAR GATE (Harcourt, Brace, $3). Miss Norton is excelled by no one as a bard of interstellar adventure; and this seems to me her best book to date—an exciting tale of alternate worlds in which a man may do battle with his own might-have-been self, told with Haggardesque sweep, an effective touch of mysticism, and wonderful creation of alien cultures and fauna.

The Norton "juveniles" are regularly and rightfully reprinted by Ace as adult paperbacks; the latest is the excellent STAR BORN (1957), which shares a 35¢ Double-Book with A PLANET FOR TEXANS, a novella by H. Beam Piper and John J. McGuire which appeared last year in *Fantastic Universe* as LONE STAR PLANET. I'd like to have seen this expanded to book length: characters and background are sometimes too sketchily roughed in. But there's still a good amount of lively entertainment in this well-plotted melodrama of transgalactic intrigue on a wild and wooly planet whose customs and laws are, you might say, those of Texas raised to a Texan power.

Briefer notice:

FIRE IN THE HEAVENS, by George O. Smith (Avalon, $2.75). Spirited conflict of Big Business and Science, while interplay with another universe plays hell with the conservation of energy. Lively and,

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in this dullish year, refreshing. (*Startling*, 1949)

SLAVES OF THE KLAU, by Jack Vance (Ace, 35¢). Problems of a kidnaped earthman as two galactic Master Races vie for Earth. Colorful ironic adventure—and in the same book is Vance's similarly likable BIG PLANET (1957).

THE JOY WAGON, by Arthur T. Hadley (Viking, $3.50). How Mike Microvac, the world's most advanced electronic calculator, won the nomination for President and lost the election. Fine idea, lackluster treatment.

DEADLY IMAGE, by Edmund Cooper (Ballantine, 35¢). Quick-frozen hero survives H-war, is revived in decadent future society dependent on androids—which are about to Take Over. Overfamiliar material, but well detailed, smoothly told.

THE GATES OF IVORY, THE GATES OF HORN, by Thomas McGrath (Mainstream, $2.25; paper, $1). Another attack on a future of perfection and conformity, this time with overtones of Kafka and Marx. Again perhaps overfamiliar; but striking offbeat writing makes for eerily effective moments.

WAR WITH THE GIZMOS, by Murray Leinster (Gold Medal, 35¢). Admirably created Alien Invaders in routine old-fashioned story.

THE SPACE EGG, by Russ Winterbotham (Avalon, $2.95). This is the one about the Sinister Symbiotes from Space – lightweight, inconsistent, but fairly fast and readable.

LEST WE FORGET THEE, EARTH, by Calvin M. Knox (Ace, 35¢). This is the one about the rediscovery of the Home Planet, and Earth's fight for her rightful place in the galaxy. Good adventurous start, crumbling into fiction's silliest space battle.

STARHAVEN, by Ivar Jorgensen (Avalon, $2.75). Wild tale of conspiracy on a sanctuary-planet for the galaxy's criminals—fun in its foolish way, rather like a streamlined Hawk Carse.

BEYOND 30 & THE MAN-EATER, by Edgar Rice Burroughs (Science-Fiction & Fantasy, $3). First hardcover publication of 2 short novels (1915-16): one is primitive s.f., with interesting pioneering ideas but crude handling. Collectors only.

THE MASK OF CTHULHU, by August Derleth (Arkham, $3.50). 6 pastiches in the manner of Lovecraft, mostly from *Weird Tales*. One (*Something in Wood*) is readable.

Editor's footnote: *In connection with Mr. Boucher's comments on Algis Budrys' work, we are pleased to report that a new Budrys novelet will appear here next month.* *See page 4 for further details.*

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One of the good old names in science fiction makes his first appearance in these pages. . . .

beans

by JACK WILLIAMSON

THROUGH SOME UNEXPLAINED CEREbral freak, John Slurvian was naturally immune to the hypnotic radiation of the invaders. Otherwise, he was an ordinary American—a speech teacher in a Midwestern high school. The day the invaders came, Slurvian was drawing a phonetics diagram on the blackboard when he became conscious of an unaccustomed quiet, and looked around to discover his pupils had progressed from their usual drowsiness into a coma-like sleep.

Three days later he emerged from the affected area with his news of the wrecked vehicles along the dead roads and the unfought fires eating up the stricken cities inside the Sleep-Out. Still immune, he was equipped with a portable radio transmitter and sent back as a military scout.

Radio reports from the heroic John Slurvian quickly pinpointed the beachhead of the invaders, high in the central Rockies. Although manned equipment was clearly useless, it seemed reasonable that unmanned rockets in sufficient numbers might save the country. All the nation's remaining ballistic firepower, therefore, had been gathered on the edge of the Sleep-Out for a last desperate atomic offensive—when Communications, safely in the rear, picked up a final weak, fragmentary message from the wounded and apparently dying John Slurvian.

"Delay H-Hour!" That hasty order went out to the atomic installations. "Co-existence with invaders may be possible, if we demonstrate good will — evidently they are harmless vegetarians. John Slurvian reports, 'Invaders eat only [*word missing*] beans'."

H-Hour was postponed — too long. A sudden expansion of the Sleep-Out overwhelmed the crews around the waiting missiles, even as Headquarters' final message echoed tinnily in silent command posts:

"Fire at once! Communications experts have reconstructed missing word in earlier John Slurvian message: 'Invaders eat only *human* beans!'"

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Pure poetry and shining lucre are traditional enemies—but suppose a man had the gift for both? Worse yet, suppose the poetry were highly impure, the lucre's shine grossly false, and the man's gift still so great, so like an overflowing cornucopia, that—willy-nilly, want to or not, ready or not—he continually poured these shoddy products out upon the world?

Highly embarrassing, but highly entertaining, too. And reminiscent of Pope's couplet:

"Get Place and Wealth, if possible with Grace
If not, by any means get Wealth and Place."

MR. MILTON'S GIFT

by Robert Arthur

TODAY IS MY BIRTHDAY (SAID Murchison Morks) and the fact of its being my birthday reminds me of a story which I could tell you if my throat wasn't a bit dry.... Thank you, I will. Make it a double Scotch, just a dash of soda—

Ah.... Well, this story is going to answer a question you've probably asked yourself a hundred times. And you'll see, when I've finished, that it's the only possible answer, even though you may find some of the facts I'm going to tell you a bit surprising.

The fellow that all this happened to was named Horace Milton. He was thirty-three at the time—a nice, quiet chap who minded his own business and had been married for eight years to a very pretty wife named Martha, whom he loved very much. Horace was a bookkeeper and his boss, Mr. Springer, was a slave driver who often kept him working late at the office.

This particular night Mr. Springer had kept Horace even later than usual, and it was Martha's birthday, too, which is the only reason Horace stepped into Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe in the first place. To buy her a present. Horace had never noticed Ye Olde Gifttee Shoppe before, but this particular night he was walking

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home by a different route and there it was, with a vacant lot on one side and a warehouse on the other.

The place was dark, except for a faint yellow light that gleamed through the dusty window, just bright enough to show up the words painted on the glass, Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe, that had made him stop in the first place. It certainly wasn't much of a place, even for a "gifttee shoppe." But here he was, almost home, with Martha expecting a nice birthday present and every other store in the neighborhood shut tight, so—well, Horace stepped through the doorway.

As soon as he was inside, though, he concluded he'd made a mistake. Inside the place looked even less like a giftte shoppe and more like a junkke shoppe.

In one corner was what looked like an egg the size of a bushel basket, and hanging from the ceiling above it was a pair of old slippers with little wings at the heels. Horace could have sworn he saw the wings beat a couple of times, but of course it was just a trick of the shadows made by the old oil lamp hanging from the ceiling.

There was more, but he couldn't quite make out what the rest of the stock consisted of, for it was covered with a fine assortment of cobwebs. He'd seen enough, though, to make him decide to take his trade elsewhere, when he heard the clearing of a throat behind him.

Horace spun around. There beside a long dusty counter stood the proprietor, looking at Horace. He couldn't have been more than four feet tall—his eyes were on a level with Horace's middle coat button. Very curious eyes they were, too — large and round and glowing yellow, like a jack-o'-lantern's, and set in a pointed face made to seem even smaller by two ears uncommonly long and sharp.

"Good evening, Mr. Milton," the fellow said, very pleasantly. The yellow jack-o'-lantern eyes blinked once, and the pointed tip of one ear twitched. "Can I do anything for you?"

"Uh," Horace mumbled, "I was just looking for a gift for my wife. But I don't see anything suitable." And he started backing toward the door.

He didn't make it, though. One long thin arm shot out—seeming to stretch as if made of rubber—caugh him by the coat and pulled him back.

"Now, sir!" The strange proprietor cocked his head at Horace, the large yellow eyes glowing. "A gift for your wife? Exactly! Is she the nagging kind? Is she extravagant, talkative, greedy? Or have you just grown tired of her for no reason, which often happens?"

"Why—why, no," Horace stam-

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mered. "It's nothing like that at all."

"No matter," the little fellow said, rubbing his hands with a dry, whisking sound. "Your reasons are your own. Whatever you want, we have it. Antimony, spirits of hemlock, silken nooses, henbane—which do you prefer? If you'll let me make a suggestion, I advise you to take my own special Spirit-away Powder—just dust it lightly over a sleeping wife and experience no further annoyance."

"Why, I don't want any of those things!" Horace said indignantly. "I love my wife. She does worry too much about making me wear rubbers in wet weather, and she cries if I forget her birthday or our anniversary, but outside of that I haven't any complaint."

"Extraordinary!" The yellow eyes blinked twice. "Can't recall when a husband has said such a thing to me in centuries. I must think."

This he did, resting a sharp chin in one hand and closing his eyes for several seconds. Then he beamed at Horace.

"To be sure," he said. "You want to give your wife something as an evidence of your affection. A natural mistake on my part. I usually sell such gifts only to brides. So now: What kind of gift did you have in mind?"

"Why, just a gift," Horace said. "Something to show her I love her, and to keep her satisfied so I can get the work done I'm taking home tonight. I was thinking of a silver cream pitcher."

"A silver cream pitcher! My dear sir, I don't deal in such articles! You said you wanted a gift, didn't you? Well, that's what I sell here—gifts. Now come, come, give me some notion what gift your wife would like. What does she seem to desire most in life, or feel the absence of most keenly? By the way, call me Clarence. That's my name."

"Why—er—Mr. Clarence," Horace Milton mumbled, considerably bewildered by now, "what she wants most I guess, is for me to make more money. I'm not very good at asking for raises, and Mr. Springer is a very hard man to talk to, so—"

"The gift of making money!" Clarence rubbed his hands together. "Now we're progressing. That would be a gift she'd appreciate, eh? If you had the gift of making money?"

"Why, yes," Horace agreed. "But that would be a gift I'd have to have and— Wait a minute, I'm getting all confused. We started out talking about one kind of gift and now we're talking about another. A birthday gift and the gift of making money aren't the same thing at all."

"Tut, tut," Clarence said. "A gift is a gift. We deal only in one kind here—the genuine article. Of course if you had the gift of mak-

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ing money, it would be a gift your wife would appreciate for her birthday."

"But—" By now Horace's head was spinning. "How could I explain to Martha that I had a gift for making money, which was a birthday gift for her, because — Oh, dear," he groaned. "I don't feel well. I have to go. Really I do. I'll come back some other time."

Clarence's hand darted out again and seized his lapel.

"Nonsense!" the little man said. "Have you ten dollars?"

"Yes," Horace gulped, "but—"

"Then it's a deal. Grasp my hand firmly." He thrust out a long thin hand, curiously cool and dry to the touch, and Horace took it. He couldn't help himself.

"Shillings, pounds and pence, dollars, dimes and cents," Clarence chanted, his eyes closed. "By this hand may you make 'em, even if you have to fake 'em. Abracadabra and so forth."

The yellow eyes opened.

"There," the little man said. "It's done. Spell enough for an easy gift like that one. Ten dollars, please."

In a daze Horace took out his wallet and handed over the money.

"Now," Clarence said, "you're entitled to our free gift offer, extra-special this year only — one gift free with every gift you buy. Hold out your hand again."

Horace tried to refuse, but Clarence grabbed it anyway.

"June, moon, love, dove, sigh, die," he chanted, eyes tight shut. "You're a poet, you will know it. Abracadabra, et cetera."

Opening his eyes, he beamed at Horace.

"There!" he said. "Now you have the gift of verse too. Only appropriate gift I could think of to match your name. Horace and Milton! Great fellows, both of them. Poets, too. Well, I'm certainly happy you came in. Haven't had a customer in I don't know how long, and I was almost ready to shut up shop and move somewhere else. Come in any time you want another gift. I have the finest stock in this hemisphere. The gift of gab, of music, of courage, of second sight, of optimism, of punctuality—all those and lots more. See you again, Mr. Milton."

He gave a quick, bobbing bow and a moment later Horace found himself out in the street once more, wondering confusedly how Clarence had known his name.

It was three blocks farther on before Horace was anything like himself again, and then only after stepping into Harry's Bar and Grill for a quick one—only beer, of course. He decided against trying to get his ten dollars back—no telling, what might happen if he tangled with Clarence and Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe again. One thing was certain, though — he'd have to keep the whole affair secret from Martha.

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And he still had to find her a present, too.

Well, Horace didn't have any trouble with the present, as it turned out. There was a second-hand shop only a block from his apartment and he caught the proprietor just closing up. Horace bought a silver cream pitcher that the fellow had polished so you couldn't tell it had been used at all. They were both a bit startled when Horace said, "I want a present for my wife, a silver pitcher or a knife," but then they grinned and assumed Horace had accidentally made a rhyme.

Horace began to wonder a little, though, when he got home and handed Martha the pitcher and said tenderly, "Just a present for my dear one, hope it doesn't seem a queer one. It's nothing fancy, it is true, but it shows that I love you."

Martha gaped at him, and Horace, flabbergasted, gaped back. But then Martha laughed happily and patted his cheek.

"What a silly you are, Horace!" she said. "Even making up a verse to go with it. It makes me very happy that you didn't forget what the day is. And I've cooked a special dinner for you—roast beef, mashed potatoes and peas, with ice cream for dessert."

"That sounds like a dandy dinner, though not the kind to make me thinner," Horace said with enthusiasm. "Mashed potatoes and roast beef please me 'most beyond belief; I will probably stuff and stuff, are you sure you have enough?"

Martha gave him a strange look.

"Horace," she demanded suspiciously, "are you drunk?"

"Of course I'm not drunk, dear," Horace denied. "I've only had a single beer."

"Well, you're certainly talking very strangely. I wish you'd stop it."

"Certainly, dear, if it'll please you," Horace mumbled, unfolding his paper and plumping himself down behind it in his easy chair. "I was only trying to tease you."

Then, rather than risk any more conversation, he devoted himself to the sports page. But his mind was not on American League standings.

His mind was back in Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe. And a horrible suspicion was coming over him that Clarence, the proprietor—

But it wasn't possible! It simply wasn't!

"It isn't true!" Horace muttered to himself. "It isn't true. Such things can't be done to you!" Then, realizing he had spoken in verse again, he shut up. Maybe it wasn't true, but just the same—

Dinner was a strained affair. Martha kept glancing at him strangely, and Horace for his part confined his conversation to monosyllables. By the time dinner was

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over. Martha was almost in tears. She pointedly put the silver cream pitcher out of sight and when she had finished the dishes she went off to bed without even saying good night.

Unhappily, Horace got out the ledgers he'd brought home with him and tried to work on them. He uncapped the beautiful Swiss-made fountain pen Martha had given him for a wedding present, the one that wrote black, green, blue or red. Horace had never seen another one like it in this country and usually with it in his fingers his work was a pleasure. But not tonight. His mind kept wandering.

He found himself with Martha's scissors in his hand, aimlessly clipping a sheet of notepaper into rectangles. Sternly he focused his mind again on the ledgers—but his mind wouldn't stay there. He kept thinking of Ye Old Gifttee Shoppe and Clarence and wondering if—

But the more he thought about the evening's strange happenings, the more bewildered he became. His thoughts kept chasing themselves around like mice playing tag. Then he came to himself with a start and realized he'd been sitting there no telling how long, woolgathering and doodling with his fountain pen all over one of the slips of paper he'd cut out. He might as well be in bed.

Breakfast the next morning did not start the day off on quite the right note, though Horace came to the table ready to apologize.

"Good morning, my dear; the day seems clear," he said. "Coffee smells swell, hope you slept well."

The beginnings of a smile fled from his wife's clear, youthful features. Her lips closed tightly and a single tear, squeezing from the corner of her eye, was her only answer.

Horace finished his toast and coffee, grabbed his hat and briefcase, and marched toward the door. Then he turned, as always, to kiss Martha good-by.

"Horace," she said then, "do you think you should go to the office today? I mean—perhaps you're ill. Maybe you should go see Dr. Phelps. I thought you were just teasing me, but—"

"I am not the least bit ill; I have no need to take a pill," Horace said with dignity. "If I've caused you any pain, I'm sorry—but I can't explain. Now excuse me, but I'm late. Mr. Springer hates to wait."

Then, as the tears welled up in Martha's clear blue eyes again, he hastily closed the door. It was terrible, worrying her like this—but suppose he tried to tell her the truth? Then she'd be positive he was going off his chump, and she'd worry twice as much. . . .

Horace tried to forget his troubles by plunging into work as soon as he reached the office. But he'd hardly opened his ledgers when

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the phone rang. It was Martha.

"Horace!" she said tenderly over the telephone. "You darling! Oh, I'm so ashamed of being angry at you. But what a funny way to give me such a wonderful present."

"What did you say?" Horace asked, baffled. "Repeat it, pray."

"I said you're a darling, leaving it on the sideboard for me to find after you'd left, and making me realize how bad-tempered I'd been, and how good to me you really were. Now I can't talk any more—I'm hurrying right downtown."

She hung up and Horace, rubbing his forehead, put the phone down. He couldn't imagine what she was talking about, but he didn't have time to think about it now because there was work to be done on the books and Mr. Springer would want to see them as soon as he came in. So Horace plunged into his work. Luck was with him this time, the figures balanced easily, and Mr. Springer didn't show up until almost noon. By then Horace had the books finished and was sitting back, daydreaming and doodling with his fountain pen. He was thinking, suppose some day he did acquire the gift of making money and got rich, first thing he'd do would be to take Martha on a second honeymoon, a trip around the world, and then—

"Milton!"

Horace jumped. It was Mr. Springer himself, standing by his chair, looking down, his fishlike face very red.

"I've been calling you for the last five minutes!"

"Sorry, Mr. Springer, didn't mean to linger," Horace mumbled and gathered up the books. Mr. Springer stalked into his private office and Horace followed. Then for several minutes he just sat while Mr. Springer, grunting occasionally, leafed through the ledgers. Presently Mr. Springer stopped at an item.

"This three-thousand-dollar rebate for Willis and Company," he growled. "What was that for?"

"That one's easy to explain, it was just a damage claim," Horace said without thinking. "Freight car in a wreck, smashed our shipment all to heck. We paid Willis, railroad paid us; no one made a bit of fuss."

"What?" Mr. Springer's jaw had dropped. "Milton, what's wrong with you? Are you drunk?"

"No, sir," Horace gulped and closed his mouth before he could say anything that rhymed.

"You're talking very oddly!"

He continued with the ledgers, looking suspiciously at Horace from the corners of his eyes from time to time. At last he came to the final page.

"All right, Milton," he began; then his jaw dropped even lower than before. He was staring goggle-eyed at something on the

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final page. Nervously Horace peered over to see what it was.

It was a hundred-dollar bill, pasted to the bottom of the ledger sheet.

No, not pasted. Drawn there! Just one side of it, of course, the side with Benjamin Franklin's portrait on it. But it certainly looked real.

Mr. Springer's eyes popped. First he tried to pick up the hundred. Then he ran his fingers over it and found it really was drawn on the page.

"Milton, what does this mean?" he thundered.

Horace swallowed hard. He remembered now, doodling something while daydreaming about being rich—he must have drawn the bill then. But it was a perfect hundred-dollar bill right down to the last fine penstrokes—only he'd drawn it with a fountain pen on a page of a ledger!

"I don't know, I'm shore," Horace stammered. "It wasn't there before."

What Springer would have said to this he never knew. At that instant the office door burst open and Miss Perkins, the receptionist, stood there looking scared.

"Mr. Springer, there's two men here want to see Mr. Milton, and—"

But the men hadn't waited. They came right in, big men, solid men, with gimlet eyes and square jaws.

"Treasury Department," the first one said. "We want to talk to Horace Milton. His wife's just been picked up for passing a phony hundred-dollar bill and she says he gave it to her."

"Is that so?" Mr. Springer said. "There's your man. I always thought he had a criminal face. Now excuse me, while I call my auditors and order a complete check of his accounts."

So in practically no time Horace was in the pokey, his mind a whirl of dismay and bewilderment. Of course they didn't haul him right down and toss him heave-ho through the jail doors. First they took him to a big, gloomy building, and there was Martha, red-eyed and sobbing.

"Oh, Horace," she wailed, "why did you do it? I told you I wanted nice things but I didn't want them so badly you had to become a counterfeiter. I was happy, really, I was!" And she began to sob again.

After that the gimlet-eyed, square-jawed men questioned him, first one, then another. But the more Horace tried to explain about Clarence and Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe, with every time his mouth opening those jingly verses coming out—well, you can imagine the result.

"We've got hold of a wack!" one of the men finally said wearily. "There's no such place as this

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Olde Giftte Shoppe in the directory, and our men can't find any such establishment in that neighborhood. This guy is going to be more of a headache than Old 880. Put him in a cell and give him twenty-four hours to think it over; then we'll question him again. Those awful rhymes are driving me crazy!"

They let Martha have one final word with him before they dragged him away.

"It's all my fault, Horace; you did it for me," she sobbed, clinging to him and taking the press out of his coat with her tears. "I don't care what you've done, I love you and I'll stand by you. I'll even go to Alcatraz with you, if I have to. My sister's husband's cousin is Mortimer Flugle the criminal lawyer, and I'm going to hire him for you right away."

This evidence of Martha's love and affection cheered Horace up for a little while, but when he found himself alone in a cold cell, his spirits began to droop again. He was in a bad spot, and he knew it.

Last night he'd been doodling with his fountain pen on a slip of paper—only he hadn't just been doodling. Unknown to him, his hand was drawing a perfect hundred-dollar bill.

Then later in the office he'd been daydreaming and doodling again, and this time his hand had drawn one side of a hundred-dollar bill on Mr. Springer's ledgers. All because of that silly charm Clarence had recited last night in Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe, " 'Shillings, pounds and pence, dollars, dimes and cents; by this hand may you make 'em, even if you have to fake 'em.' "

"Hey, Milton!" called the guard. "You got a visitor. Here's your mouthpiece. Ten minutes, Counselor."

The cell door opened and closed and Horace looked up at Mortimer Flugle, his wife's sister's husband's cousin. Mortimer Flugle was large and paunchy, with a chin that had been doubled and redoubled, and a pink face adorned by glasses on a black ribbon, and he didn't just exude benevolence, he broadcast it.

"Well, well, Milton," said Flugle. "Charged with counterfeiting, eh? Mighty good workmanship too, I hear. Suppose you tell me about it."

Horace shrugged dolefully.

"I bought a gift for making money; the gift would really be a honey if the money wasn't funny," he sighed. "I mean phony. I mean—"

He stopped. Flugle was staring at him oddly.

"You're upset," the lawyer said soothingly. "Suppose you start over and try again."

Horace took a deep breath.

"I tried to buy my wife a present, something she'd consider

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pleasant. I didn't want her to be vexed, so I wound up getting hexed. A gift this Clarence fellow sold me, but the thing he never told me was I'd be a counterfeiter—"

He stopped again, for Mortimer Flugle had backed away.

"It's all right, Milton, perfectly all right," Flugle said hastily. "Naturally you're upset. I'll tell you what. Now as I understand it you claim you drew that phony century note with your fountain pen. Suppose you just demonstrate for me, so I'll know how strong their case is. I've brought you some paper cut to the right size and—"

At Horace's look he stopped.

"Yes, yes, of course," Flugle burbled, backed right up against the cell door. "Then let's do it this way: You write down all the facts instead, while I go chat with the boys. I'll be back in half an hour or so and we'll map our strategy."

He pressed some paper into Horace's hand, called the guard, and left hurriedly. Horace didn't blame him. He took out his fountain pen. But what was the use of writing anything? Who would believe the truth? And what else could he tell them? All he could do was plead guilty and go off to Atlanta or Leavenworth—or maybe Alcatraz. And perhaps while he was in prison the hex would wear off. . . .

Horace had already served half his sentence, in his mind, when the cell door reopened and Flugle came in again.

"Well, well, got it all written out?" Flugle asked, taking the oblong pad from Horace. "Now let's just see—"

He stopped with a strangled noise that sounded like *"Awrk!"* He held up the pad and stared at it. Then he lowered it and stared at Horace.

"So it's true!" he breathed. "You said you had a gift—my boy—but it's more than a gift, it's sheer genius."

"What?" Horace asked. "What are you talking about, Flugle? Or are you just blowing, like a bugle?"

Flugle ignored the insult.

"This, my boy," he said. "I'm talking about this." He held up the pad, and Horace turned slightly green. While he was daydreaming he had turned one of those precut slips of paper into another hundred-dollar bill!

He snatched for it, but Flugle put the pad in his pocket.

"Now, Milton, calm yourself," he crooned. "I'm not going to mention this to anybody. Instead I'm going right up and bail you out myself, even if the bail is twenty-five thousand. We must have a conference about this gift of yours, Milton; we really must!"

That is how it happened that an hour later Horace Milton was driving across town with Flugle himself at the wheel, with a gleam

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in his eye that Horace didn't like.

"Now, Milton," Flugle said, "I'm not going to ask you how you do it. How, with an ordinary fountain pen, you can whip up a bill that could fool the treasury men, is your secret. But you have a talent —no, a genius, and it must be properly harnessed.

"The thing that tripped you up was the paper. Now it just happens that I also have another client who has had a little trouble with the T-men. But in his case it wasn't the paper, it was the engraving that stopped him.

"So it occurred to me, why shouldn't I introduce you to each other? He has a fine stock of paper and you—well, you have the ability to make that paper worth something. What you and he do in a business way after I've introduced you is no concern of mine. But I predict you'll both do extraordinarily well, and I hope you won't forget it was Mortimer Flugle who brought you together.

"As for the present little trouble of yours, I've already got three different lines of defense mapped out, and there's always insanity to fall back on. If we need that, all we have to do is put you on the stand and let you start your story about that little fellow you call Clarence, and it's in the bag."

He put a large, soft hand reassuringly on Horace's arm, but the truth is Horace wasn't listening. For they were driving down a dingy, badly lit street near his apartment and all of a sudden he saw a shop that looked familiar. As they came abreast of it he saw he was right — there were the words on the window, Ye Old Giftte Shoppe, and a single light inside, just barely visible.

"Flugle!" Milton shouted. "There's the shop, so come to a stop! Step on the brake, you legal fake!"

"What?" Flustered by Horace's outburst, Flugle brought the car to a stop. "What's the matter, Milton?"

But Horace did not pause to bandy words with him—or verses. He opened the door and leaped to the sidewalk.

"Milton!" Flugle wailed. "Come back here. I put up your bail out of my own pocket!"

But by then Horace was halfway down the block, jet-propelled by desperation. He reached Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe and hurled himself through the door.

"Clarence!" He skidded to a stop in the dusty gloom of the interior. "Show your face or else I'll start to take this place of yours apart!"

Two jack-o'-lantern eyes popped up from behind the counter and blinked at him, separately.

"Good evening," Clarence said, the pointed tip of his right ear twitching twice. "Why, it's Mr. Milton! Come to buy another gift? Dear me, just when I was

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closing up my shop and moving to another location, too."

"No!" cried Horace. "I want you just to take them back! I can live with money's lack, but free me from this dreadful curse of talking thus in silly verse and penning counterfeited money. The fix I'm in now isn't funny!"

"I'm sorry," Clarence said firmly, "but I can't do it. All sales are final. If I didn't make that rule, people would be forever trying to get their money back. You know how people are, never satisfied."

Well, at that Horace got even more excited and he almost exploded, trying to explain to Clarence that he didn't want his money, he just wanted to give back the gifts, with all the explanations coming out in those jingling verses until Horace almost screamed from sheer frustration. And in his excitement he said some things he shouldn't have, because Clarence drew himself up to his full four feet and told Horace he couldn't take back any goods, he was closing up shop for lack of customers and had just finished packing the last of his stock and there wasn't room in the crates for a single item more.

"I'm going to try the Sixteenth Century, this time," Clarence said. "They'll have more faith in my merchandise. Nobody believes me in this century of yours—nobody but you, and even you aren't satisfied. Now good-by, Mr. Milton!"

Horace looked around and saw it was true—the shop was empty except for several big packing-cases already nailed up and one Clarence was just getting ready to close. He started to put the lid on and at that Horace became more desperate than ever. He began to beg and plead in such heart-rending verses that at last Clarence weakened.

"All right," he said. "Just to be obliging I'll exchange one of the gifts for any other gift you choose. But I can't exchange them both and I can't take them back. It's impossible; this is my first sale in goodness knows when and if I check in at the home office, without even one sale on my books, I may not get another chance. So that's the best deal I can make and I'm stretching things to do it. Now which gift do you want to return and what do you want in exchange for it?"

Horace didn't even have to think. He said he'd keep the gift of verse and turn in the gift of making money—because no matter what people thought, they couldn't put you in jail for talking in rhymed couplets. Then he named the gift he'd take in exchange. So Clarence took Horace's hand and mumbled:

"Dibbery dobbery, flummery flobbery; even exchange is no robbery. Abracadabra, and all that."

"There," he said, "it's all done. And don't worry about what hap-

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pened today. Now that the gift's gone, the evidence is gone too. Well, good-by, Mr. Milton."

When Horace's case came up for trial, there wasn't any evidence against him—just a blank piece of paper nobody would believe had once been a counterfeit hundred-dollar bill.

So the judge let him go, though he gave him a very stern talking-to first, to which Horace answered not a word. In fact, from the moment he stepped out of Ye Old Giftte Shoppe that second time he had scarcely opened his mouth except to eat—no matter what was said to him, he just smiled and didn't answer.

He's never been in any trouble since, and you may even know him—a very nice-looking chap in his late thirties, going just a little bald, with an extremely attractive wife who does all the talking when they're out together. The reason for that is because there in Ye Olde Giftte Shoppe, when he realized he had to keep the gift of verse he chose the gift of silence, too.

So the two pretty well even each other out except at home, where Martha has got quite used to hearing Horace comment on the day's news in couplets and quatrains. And in fact, listening to Horace discuss the Dodgers' chances for the pennant is as good as hearing someone recite "Casey at the Bat."

Martha would be quite upset if Horace ever changed, because she soon saw where his talents could be put to a commercial use. So she didn't let him go back to bookkeeping. She steered him into a new line and now Horace is just about a millionaire.

What line is he in? (Murchison Morks lifted his empty glass and stared at it. When it had been refilled he gazed at us across the top of it.) Why, I thought naturally you would have guessed. It was getting a birthday card this morning that reminded me of him. You know all those millions of birthday cards and Christmas cards and Mother's Day and Father's Day and Get Well cards, and cards for every conceivable occasion? You must have asked yourself a hundred times where on earth they get all the bad verses on those cards.

Horace Milton, that's where. Next time you get one, read the message out loud. You'll realize at once that no one could write that kind of verse deliberately. You'd have to have a gift for it.

(And with the air of a man made thirsty by talking, Morks drained his glass.)

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A leading gourmet began a column some years ago with this complete paragraph: "The way to cook a fish is to cook a fish." Basic, you say. Hard to deny. But it overlooks a point of particular interest to such a dedicated fisherman as the editor—first you've got to catch the fish. Conceivably the columnist is of that school which believes a fisherman is as cold-blooded as any mackerel, and that killing a fish is equivalent to murder. There is a larger school which considers the butchering of a pig or the shooting of a deer as murder. These are clear-cut opinions, comparatively simple to accept or reject. Consider, however, as Carol Emshwiller so perceptively does below, the problems of a lone hunter on a new and differently populated world—the terrible decisions he must make . . . and the afterthoughts he must live with.

pelt

by Carol Emshwiller

SHE WAS A WHITE DOG WITH A wide face and eager eyes, and this was the planet, Jaxa, in winter.

She trotted well ahead of the master, sometimes nose to ground, sometimes sniffing the air, and she didn't care if they were being watched or not. She knew that strange things skulked behind iced trees, but strangeness was her job. She had been trained for it, and crisp, glittering Jaxa was, she felt, exactly what she *had* been trained for, *born* for.

I love it, I love it . . . that was in her pointing ears, her waving tail . . . I *love* this place.

It was a world of ice, a world with the sound of breaking goblets. Each time the wind blew they came shattering down by the trayful, and each time one branch brushed against another it was, Skoal, Down the hatch, To the Queen . . . tink, tink, tink. And the sun was reflected as if from a million cut-glass punch bowls under a million crystal chandeliers.

She wore four little black boots,

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and each step she took sounded like two or three more goblets gone, but the sound was lost in the other tinkling, snapping, cracklings of the silver, frozen forest about her.

She had figured out at last what that hovering scent was. It had been there from the beginning, the landing two days ago, mingling with Jaxa's bitter air and seeming to be just a part of the smell of the place, she found it in criss-crossing trails about the squatting ship, and hanging, heavy and recent, in hollows behind flat-branched, piney-smelling bushes. She thought of honey and fat men and dry fur when she smelled it.

There was something big out there, and more than one of them, more than two. She wasn't sure how many. She had a feeling this was something to tell the master, but what was the signal, the agreed upon noise for: We are being watched? There was a whisper of sound, short and quick, for: Sighted close, come and shoot. And there was a noise for danger (all these through her throat mike to the receiver at the master's ear), a special, howly bark: Awful, awful—there is something awful going to happen. There was even a noise, a low, rumble of sound for: Wonderful, wonderful fur—drop everything and come after *this* one. (And she knew a good fur when she saw one. She had been trained to know.) But there was no sign for: We are being watched.

She'd whined and barked when she was sure about it, but that had got her a pat on the head and a rumpling of the neck fur. "You're doing fine, Baby. This world is our oyster, all ours. All we got to do is pick up the pearls. Jaxa's what we've been waiting for." And Jaxa was, so she did her work and didn't try to tell him anymore, for what was one more strange thing in one more strange world?

She was on the trail of something now, and the master was behind her, out of sight. He'd better hurry. He'd better hurry or there'll be waiting to do, watching the thing, whatever it is, steady on until he comes, holding tight back, and that will be hard. Hurry, hurry.

She could hear the whispered whistle of a tune through the receiver at her ear and she knew he was not hurrying but just being happy. She ran on, eager, curious. She did not give the signal for hurry, but she made a hurry sound of her own, and she heard him stop whistling and whisper back into the mike, "So, so, Queen of Venus. The furs are waiting to be picked. No hurry, Baby." But morning was to her for hurry. There was time later to be tired and slow.

That fat-man honeyish smell

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was about, closer and strong. Her curiosity became two pronged—this smell or that? What *is* the big thing that watches? She kept to the trail she was on, though. Better to be sure, and this thing was not so elusive, not twisting and doubling back, but up ahead and going where it was going.

She topped a rise and half slid, on thick furred rump, down the other side, splattering ice. She snuffled at the bottom to be sure of the smell again, and then, nose to ground, trotted past a thick and tangled hedgerow.

She was thinking through her nose, now. The world was all smell, crisp air and sour ice and turpentine pine . . . and this animal, a urine and brown grass thing . . . and then, strong in front of her, honey-furry-fat man.

She felt it looming before she raised her head to look, and there it was, the smell in person, some taller than the master and twice as wide. Counting his doubled suit and all, twice as wide.

This was a fur! Wonderful, wonderful. But she just stood, looking up, mouth open and lips pulled back, the fur on the back of her neck rising more from the suddenness than from fear.

It was silver and black, a tiger-striped thing, and the whitish parts glistened and caught the light as the ice of Jaxa did, and sparkled and dazzled in the same way. And there, in the center of the face, was a large and terrible orange eye, rimmed in black with black radiating lines crossing the forehead and rounding the head. That spot of orange dominated the whole figure, but it was a flat, blind eye, unreal, grown out of fur. At first she saw only that spot of color, but then she noticed under it two small, red glinting eyes and they were kind, not terrible.

This was the time for the call; Come, come and get the great fur, the huge-price-tag fur for the richest lady on earth to wear and be dazzling in and most of all to pay for. But there was something about the flat, black nose and the tender, bow-shaped nose and those kind eyes that stopped her from calling. Something master-like. She was full of wondering and indecision and she made no sound at all.

The thing spoke to her then, and its voice was a deep lullaby sound of buzzing cellos. It gestured with a thick, fur-backed hand. It promised, offered, and asked; and she listened, knowing and not knowing.

The words came slowly.

This . . . is . . . world.

Here is the sky, the earth, the ice. The heavy arms moved. The hands pointed.

We have watched you, little slave. What have you done that is free today? Take the liberty. Here is the earth for your four shoed

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feet, the sky of stars, the ice to drink. Do something free today. Do, do.

Nice voice, she thought, nice thing. It gives and gives . . . something.

Her ears pointed forward, then to the side, one and then the other, and then forward again. She cocked her head, but the real meaning would not come clear. She poked at the air with her nose.

Say that again, her whole body said. I almost have it. I *feel* it. Say it once more and maybe then the sense of it will come.

But the creature turned and started away quickly, very quickly for such a big thing, and disappeared behind the trees and bushes. It seemed to shimmer itself away until the glitter was only the glitter of the ice and the black was only the thick, flat branches.

The master was close. She could hear his crackling steps coming up behind her.

She whined softly, more to herself than to him.

"Ho, the Queen, Aloora. Have you lost it?" She sniffed the ground again. The honey-furry smell was strong. She sniffed beyond, zig-zagging. The trail was there. "Go to it, Baby." She loped off to a sound like Chinese wind chimes, business-like again. Her tail hung guilty, though, and she kept her head low. She had missed an important signal. She'd waited until it was too late. But was the thing a man, a master? Or a fur? She wanted to do the right thing. She always tried and tried for that, but now she was confused.

She was getting close to whatever it was she trailed, but the hovering smell was still there too, though not close. She thought of gifts. She knew that much from the slow, lullaby words, and gifts made her think of bones and meat, not the dry fishy biscuit she always got on trips like this. A trickle of drool flowed from the side of her mouth and froze in a silver thread across her shoulder.

She slowed. The thing she trailed must be there, just behind the next row of trees. She made a sound in her throat . . . ready, steady . . . and she advanced until she was sure. She sensed the shape. She didn't really see it . . . mostly it was the smell and something more in the tinkling glassware noises. She gave the signal and stood still, a furry, square imitation of a pointer. Come, hurry. This waiting is the hardest part.

He followed, beamed to her radio. "Steady, Baby. Hold that pose. Good girl, good girl." There was only the slightest twitch of her tail as she wagged it, answering him in her mind.

He came up behind her and then passed, crouched, holding

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the rifle before him, elbows bent. He knelt then, and waited as if at a point of his own, rifle to shoulder. Slowly he turned with the moving shadow of the beast, and shot, twice in quick succession.

They ran forward then, together, and it was what she had expected —a deer-like thing, dainty hoofs, proud head, and spotted in three colors, large grey-green rounds on tawny yellow, with tufts of that same glittering silver scattered over.

The master took out a sharp, flat bladed knife. He began to whistle out loud as he cut off the handsome head. His face was flushed.

She sat down nearby, mouth open in a kind of smile, and she watched his face as he worked. The warm smell made the drool come at the sides of her mouth and drip out to freeze on the ice and on her paws, but she sat quietly, only watching.

Between the whistlings he grunted and swore and talked to himself, and finally he had the skin and the head in a tight, inside-out bundle.

Then he came to her and patted her sides over the ribs with a flat, slap sound, and he scratched behind her ears and held a biscuit to her on his thick-gloved palm. She swallowed it whole and then watched him as he squatted on his heels and himself ate one almost like it.

Then he got up and slung the bundle of skin and head across his back. "I'll take this one, Baby. Come on, let's get one more something before lunch." He waved her to the right. "We'll make a big circle," he said.

She trotted out, glad she was not carrying anything. She found a strong smell at a patch of discolored ice and urinated on it. She sniffed and growled at a furry, mammal-smelling bird that landed in the trees above her and sent down a shower of ice slivers on her head. She zig-zagged and then turned and bit, lips drawn back in mock rage, at a branch that scraped her side.

She followed for a while the chattery sound of water streaming along under the ice, and left it where an oily, lambish smell crossed. Almost immediately she came upon them — six, small, greenish balls of wool with floppy, woolly feet. The honey-fat man smell was strong here too, but she signaled for the lambs, the Come and shoot sound, and she stood again waiting for the master.

"*Good* girl!" His voice had special praise. "By God, this place is a gold mine. Hold it, Queen of Venus. Whatever it is, don't let go."

There was a fifty-yard clear view here and she stood in plain sight of the little creatures, but they didn't notice. The master

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came slowly and cautiously, and knelt beside her. Just as he did, there appeared at the far end of the clearing a glittering, silver and black tiger-striped man.

She heard the sharp inward breath of the master and she felt the tenseness come to him. There was a new, faint whiff of sour sweat, a stiff silence and a special way of breathing. What she felt from him made the fur rise along her back with a mixture of excitement and fear.

The tiger thing held a small packet in one hand and was peering into it and pulling at the opening in it with a blunt finger. Suddenly there was a sweep of motion beside her and five fast, frantic, shots sounded sharp in her ear. Two came after the honey-fat man had already fallen and lay like a huge, decorated sack.

The master ran forward and she came at his heels. They stopped, not too close and she watched the master looking at the big, dead, tiger head with the terrible eye. The master was breathing hard and seemed hot. His face was red and puffy looking, but his lips made a hard whitish line. He didn't whistle or talk. After a time he took out his knife. He tested the blade, making a small, bloody thread of a mark on his left thumb. Then he walked closer and she stood and watched him and whispered a questioning whine.

He stooped by the honey-fat man and it was that small, partly opened packet that he cut viciously through the center. Small round chunks fell out, bite sized chunks of dried meat and a cheesy substance and some broken bits of clear, bluish ice.

The master kicked at them. His face was not red anymore, but olive-pale. His thin mouth was open in a grin that was not a grin.

He went about the skinning then.

He did not keep the flat-faced, heavy head nor the blunt fingered hands.

The man had to make a sliding thing of two of the widest kind of flat branches to carry the new heavy fur, as well as the head and the skin of the deer. Then he started directly for the ship.

It was past eating time but she looked at his restless eyes and did not ask about it. She walked before him, staying close. She looked back often, watching him pull the sled thing by the string across his shoulder and she knew, by the way he held the rifle before him in both hands, that she should be wary.

Sometimes the damp-looking, inside-out bundle hooked on things, and the master would curse in a whisper and pull at it. She could see the bundle made him tired, and she wished he would stop for a rest and food as

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they usually did long before this time.

They went slowly, and the smell of honey-fat man hovered as it had from the beginning. They crossed the trails of many animals. Even, they saw another deer run off, but she knew that it was not a time for chasing.

Then another big silver and black tiger stood exactly before them. It appeared suddenly, as if actually it had been standing there all the time, and they had not been near enough to see it, to pick it out from its glistening background.

It just stood and looked and dared, and the master held his gun with both hands and looked too, and she stood between them glancing from one face to the other. She knew, after a moment, that the master would not shoot, and it seemed the tiger thing knew too, for it turned to look at her and it raised its arms and spread its fingers as if grasping at the forest on each side. It swayed a bit, like bigness off balance, and then it spoke in its tight-strung, cello tones. The words and the tone seemed the same as before.

Little slave, what have you done that is free today? Remember this is world. Do something free today. Do, do.

She knew that what it said was important to it, something she should understand, a giving and a taking away. It watched her, and she looked back with wide, innocent eyes, wanting to do the right thing, but not knowing what.

The tiger-fat man turned then, this time slowly, and left a wide back for the master and her to see, and then it half turned, throwing a quick glance over the heavy humped shoulder at the two of them. Then it moved slowly away into the trees and ice, and the master still held the gun with two hands and did not move.

The evening wind began to blow, and there sounded about them that sound of a million chandeliers tinkling and clinking like gigantic wind chimes. A furry bird, the size of a shrew and as fast, flew by between them with a miniature shriek.

She watched the master's face, and when he was ready she went along beside him. The soft sounds the honey-fat man had made echoed in her mind but had no meaning.

That night the master stretched the big skin on a frame and afterwards he watched the dazzle of it. He didn't talk to her. She watched him a while and then she turned around three times on her rug and lay down to sleep.

The next morning the master was slow, reluctant to go out. He studied charts of other places,

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round or hourglass-shaped maps with yellow dots and labels, and he drank his coffee standing up looking at them. But finally they did go out, squinting into the ringing air.

It was her world. More each day, she felt it was so, right feel, right temperature, lovely smells. She darted on ahead as usual, yet not too far today, and sometimes she stopped and waited and looked at the master's face as he came up. And sometimes she would whine a question before she went on . . . Why don't you walk brisk, brisk, and call me Queen of Venus, Aloora, Galaxa, or Bitch of Betelgeuse? Why don't you sniff like I do? Sniff, and you will be happy with this place . . . And she would run on again.

Trails were easy to find, and once more she found the oily lamb smell, and once more came upon them quickly. The master strode up beside her and raised his gun . . . but a moment later he turned, carelessly, letting himself make a loud noise, and the lambs ran. He made a face, and spit upon the ice. "Come on Queen. Let's get out of here. I'm sick of this place."

He turned and made the signal to go back, pointing with his thumb above his head in two jerks of motion.

But why, why? This is morning now and our world. She wagged her tail and gave a short bark, and looked at him, dancing a little on her back paws, begging with her whole body.

"Come on," he said.

She turned then, and took her place at his heel, head low, but eyes looking up at him, wondering if she had done something wrong, and wanting to be right and noticed and loved because he was troubled and preoccupied.

They'd gone only a few minutes on the way back when he stopped suddenly in the middle of a step, slowly put both feet flat upon the ground and stood like a soldier at a stiff, off-balance attention. There, lying in the way before them, was the huge, orange-eyed head and in front of it, as if at the end of outstretched arms, lay two leathery hands, the hairless palms up.

She made a growl deep in her throat and the master made a noise almost exactly like hers, but more a groan. She waited for him, standing as he stood, not moving, feeling his tenseness coming in to her. Yet it was just a head and two hands of no value, old ones they had had before and thrown away.

He turned and she saw a wild look in his eyes. He walked with deliberate steps, and she followed, in a wide circle about the spot. When they had skirted the place, he began to walk very fast.

They were not far from the ship.

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She could see its flat blackness as they drew nearer to the clearing where it was, the burned, iceless pit of spewed and blackened earth. And then she saw that the silver tiger men were there, nine of them in a wide circle, each with the honey-damp fur smell, but each with a separate particular sweetness.

The master was still walking very fast, eyes down to watch his footing, and he did not see them until he was there in the circle before them all, standing there like nine upright bears in tiger suits.

He stopped and made a whisper of a groan, and he let the gun fall low in one hand so that it hung loose with the muzzle almost touching the ground. He looked from one to the other and she looked at him, watching his pale eyes move along the circle.

"Stay," he said, and then he began to go toward the ship at an awkward limp, running and walking at the same time, banging the gun handle against the air lock as he entered.

He had said, Stay. She sat watching the ship door and moving her front paws up and down because she wanted to be walking after him. He was gone only a few minutes, though, and when he came back it was without the gun and he was holding the great fur with cut pieces of thongs dangling like ribbons along its edges where it had been tied to the stretching frame. He went at that same run-walk, unbalanced by the heavy bundle, to one of them along the circle. Three gathered together before him and refused to take it back. They pushed it, bunched loosely, back across his arms again and to it they added another large and heavy package in a parchment bag, and the master stood, with his legs wide to hold it all.

Then one honey-fat man motioned with a fur-backed hand to the ship and the bundles, and then to the ship and the master, and then to the sky. He made two sharp sounds once, and then again. And another made two different sounds, and she felt the feeling of them . . . Take your things and go home. Take them, these and these, and go.

They turned to her then and one spoke and made a wide gesture. *This is world. The sky, the earth, the ice.*

They wanted her to stay. They gave her . . . was it their world? But what good was a world?

She wagged her tail hesistantly, lowered her head and looked up at them . . . I do want to do right, to please everybody, everybody, but . . . Then she followed the master into the ship.

The locks rumbled shut. "Let's get out of here," he said. She took her place, flat on her side, take-off position. The master snapped

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the flat plastic sheet over her, covering head and all and, in a few minutes, they roared off.

Afterwards he opened the parchment bag. She knew what was in it. She knew he knew too, but she knew by the smell. He opened it and dumped out the head and the hands. His face was tight and his mouth stiff.

She saw him almost put the big head out the waste chute, but he didn't. He took it in to the place where he kept good heads and some odd paws or hoofs, and he put it by the others there.

Even she knew this head was different. The others were all slant-browed like she was and most had jutting snouts. This one seemed bigger than the big ones, with its heavy, ruffed fur and huge eye staring, and more grand than any of them, more terrible . . . and yet a flat face, with a delicate, black nose and tender lips.

The tenderest lips of all.

For the Voyagers

You will open the Door; you will step through fear
We never knew, who fought Earth's pygmy wars.
This is for you who kneel with strange new prayers,
Casting new shadows on a plangent shore
Where silence lies on moon-colored stones no more.
Thanksgiving cries in bugles of your tears,
Hailing the virgin Myth of man's desire:
White—though legend snows of Earth were whiter!—rare
As mermaids were, and whaleboats, long before
Your fathers walked upon the bare sea-floor;
Fair as once her blackened hills were fair,
The Book unwritten, the flint waiting fire—
Behold your brave new world, O Pioneers!
Draw, dare, one breath of cold miraculous air—
And remember us then, remember the lava'd sphere
Whence you were rocketed—

Remember, the living spear
Was hurled by Titan still, that struck your star.

—STARR NELSON

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Astounding Science Fiction *now carries one of the nation's distinguished book departments (and that remark is not intended to seem restricted to our field), conducted by P. Schuyler Miller. Back in the Good Old Days, when Miller frequently wrote fiction rather than reviewing it,* ASF *carried an absurdly delightful department called "Probability Zero," whose happily outrageous spirit is revived in the first new Miller story in many years.*

For Analysis

by P. SCHUYLER MILLER

THE NEWS CAUGHT UP WITH GENERAL Belknap five hundred miles north of nowhere, where he was watching the installation of a cermet landing mat on Ice Island K. When he stalked into the briefing room at Woomera, in a constellation of Aussie security men, Colonel Afton and his Harvard experts were already there. A great circle course would have saved time, but it would have taken him through the air space of a string of actively hostile or righteously neutral nations with excellent radar nets and better than good ground-to-air protection. What's more, it would have been hellishly public.

"Is he one of ours," he demanded, "or one of theirs?"

"Theirs—though we'll never prove it," Afton said sourly. "He came almost straight down, in some kind of delta-wing pod. One wing burnt through and it tumbled, so there was quite a lot to pick up. The Rhodesian police got on to it, so naturally everything was brought here and we were alerted. They have top men in every field and excellent facilities, and the checks were all under way before I got here."

He ticked them off on his fingers. "The blood groups are in the right range for eastern Europe or the fringe zone in Asia. The physical type is right too. Of course, you can get the same combination anywhere in Chicago or Buffalo. It would have been nice if his stomach had been full of Mother Minsk's Olde Ural Borscht, but he'd been eating iron rations just about the same as ours. Different yeasts, maybe, but that takes a little time to confirm.

"It gets a bit better from here. There was a little area of charred cloth stuck to the flesh under one

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rm, and it's Caspian cotton woven with a synthetic that the Harvards ay is Czech. He'd had a tooth illed some time, and it's an East German plastic. There's a pin in one thighbone, and it's the alloy they use in their military hospitals. No proof, but it hangs together."

"All right—I'll buy it. Then where was he coming from? We'd spot a satellite in hours, so it's not that. Where are they—on the Moon, Mars? Good God, man, the fact they're up there at all means they're one whole order of accomplishment past anything we can do!"

"He had this on him." The Colonel picked up a blackened metal box the size of a pack of cigarettes. A sticker on the cover was neatly hand-lettered: FOR ANALYSIS. The General opened it, grunted, and squinted hard. Prongs of what looked like platinum clutched an evanescent spall no bigger than his thumb-joint, like a ghostly, misshapen bubble.

"Chemicals won't touch it," the Colonel told him. "It doesn't scatter X-rays, and electron beams, neutrons, mesons—they all go right through. They have a good spectrophotometery set-up, so we ran it right through the spectrum, long infrared way down into the ultraviolet. Reflectance, zero; absorbance, zero; transmittance, one—*everywhere*. The index of refraction, for *all* wavelengths, is zero point nine nine nine nine, as far as you want to carry it. The dielectric constant is one point zero zero zero, also ad infinitum, and its magnetic permeability is as close to zero as we can measure."

The General closed the box softly. "What's it mean? Where did the stuff come from?"

Colonel Afton's voice was tired. "It means they've gone all the way. Beyond the Moon, beyond Mars, beyond all the planets—out where there's nothing but stars and space. How, I don't know, but they have to be there. Because that thing he was bringing back is a chip of the hardest vacuum anyone has ever seen."

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Manly Wade Wellman's "John" stories have been appearing in F&SF for seven years now, the first in the December, 1951 issue. The series—with its wonderfully strange and wonderfully familiar folk rhythms, with its recondite superstitions come alive and the itinerant minstrel toting his famous silver-strung guitar—comes to a close, we must note mournfully, with this story. But not before John introduces us to an intriguing and almost pleasant, almost friendly horror—and to Someone Else. . . .

NINE YARDS OF OTHER CLOTH

by Manly Wade Wellman

HIGH UP THAT ALMIGHTY STEEP rocky slope with the sun just sunk, I turned as I knelt by my little campfire. Looking down slope and down to where the river crawled like a snake in the valley bottom, I saw her little black figure splash across the shallow place I'd found an hour back. At noontime I'd looked from the mountain yonder across the valley and I'd seen her then, too, on another height I'd left behind. And I'd thought of a song with my name in it:

On yonder hill there stands a creature,
Who she is I do not know . . .
Oh no, John, no, John, no! . . .

But I knew she was Evadare. I'd fled from before her pretty face as never I'd fled from any living thing, not from evil spell-throwers nor murder-doers, nor either from my country's enemies when I'd soldiered in foreign parts and seen battle as the Bible prophet-book tells it, confused noises and garments rolled in blood. Since dawn I'd run from Evadare like a rabbit from a fox, and still she followed, climbing now along the trail I'd tried not to leave, toward the smoke of the fire I'd built before I knew she was still coming.

No getaway from her now, for night dropped on the world, and to climb higher would be to fall from some steep hidden place. I could wait where I was or I could

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head down and face her. Wondering which to do, I recollected how first we'd come on each other in Hosea's Hollow.

I'd not rightly known how I'd wandered there—Hosea's Hollow. I hadn't meant to, that was certain sure. No good-sensed man or woman would mean to. Folks wished Hosea's Hollow was a lost hollow, tried to stay out of it and not think about it.

Not even the old Indians relished to go there. When the white folks ran the Indians off, the Indians grinned over their shoulders as they went, calling out how Kalu would give white men the same hard times he'd given Indians.

Kalu. The Indian word means a bone. Why Kalu was named that nobody could rightly say, for nobody who saw him lived to tell what he looked to be. He came from his place when he was mad or just hungry. Who he met he snatched away, to eat or worse than eat. The folks who'd stolen the Indians' country near about loaded their wagons to go the way they'd come. Then—and this was before the time of the oldest man I'd heard tell of it—young Hosea Palmer said he'd take Kalu's curse away.

Folks hadn't wanted Hosea to try such. Hosea's father was a preacher—he begged him. So did Hosea's mother and so did a girl who'd dreamed to marry Hosea. They said if Hosea went where Kalu denned, he'd not come back, but Hosea allowed Kalu was the downright evil and couldn't prevail against a pure heart. He went in the hollow, and true he didn't come out, but no more did Kalu, from that day on. Both vanished from folks' sight and knowledge, and folks named the place Hosea's Hollow, and nary path led there.

How I myself had come to the hollow, the first soul in long years as I reckoned, it wondered me. What outside had been the broad open light of the day was cloudy gray light here among funny-growing trees. Somewhere I heard an owl hoot, not waiting for night. Likewise I half-heard music, and it came to me that was why I'd walked there without meaning to.

Later, while I watched Evadare climb up trail to me, I recollected how, in Hosea's Hollow, I'd recollected hearing the sure enough music, two days before and forty-fifty miles off.

At Haynie's Fork, hunters had shot a hog that belonged to nobody, and butched it up while the lady-folks baked pones of corn bread and sliced up coleslaw, and from here and yonder came folks carrying jugs of beady white liquor and music instruments. I was there, too, I enjoy to aid at such doings. We ate and drank and had dancing, and the most skilled men gave us music. Obray

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Ramsey picked his banjo and sang *O where is pretty Polly, O yonder she stands, with rings on the fingers of her lily-white hands,* on to the last line that's near about the frighteningest last line ary song had. Then they devilled me to play my silver-strung guitar and give them *Vandy, Vandy* and *The Little Black Train.* That led to tale-tellings, and one tale was of Hosea's Hollow and fifty different notions of what might could have gone with Hosea and whatever bore the name of Kalu. Then more music, with Byard Ray fiddling his possible best, the way we never thought to hear better.

But a tall thin stranger was there, with a chin like a skinny fist and sooty-colored hair. When Byard Ray had done, the stranger took from a bag a shiny black fiddle. I offered to pick guitar to harmony with him, but he said sharp, "No, I thank you." Alone he fiddled, and, gentlemen, he purely fiddled better than Byard Ray. When he'd done, I inquired him his name.

"Shull Cobart," he replied me. "You're John, is that right? We'll meet again, it's possible, John."

His smile was no way likeable as he walked off, while folks swore no living soul could fiddle Byard Ray down without some special fiddle-secret. That had been two days before, and here I was in Hosea's Hollow, seeming to hear music that was some way like the music of Shull Cobart's black fiddle.

The gray air shimmered, but not the least hot or bright, there where owls hooted by day. I looked at a funny-growing tree, and such flowers as it had I'd not seen before. Might be they grew from the tree, might be from a vine scrabbled up. They were cup-shape, shiny black like new shoes — or like Shull Cobart's shiny-black fiddle, and I felt I could hear him still play, could see him still grin.

Was that why I half-heard the ghost of his music, why I'd come to these black-flowered trees in the shimmery gray air? Anyway, there was a trail, showing that something moved in Hosea's Hollow, between the trees so close-grown on each side you wondered could you put a knife blade among them. I headed along the trail, and the gray dancing shimmer seemed to slow me as I walked.

That tune in my head; I swung my guitar around from where it hung with my soogin sack and blacket roll, and tweaked the music from the silver strings. The shimmer dulled off, or at least I moved faster, picking up my feet to my own playing, around a curve bunched with more black flowers. And there, under the trees to one side, was a grave.

Years old it had to be, for vines and scrub grew on it. A wooden

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cross showed it was sure enough a grave. The straight stick was as tall as my chin and as big around as my both hands could grab, and the crosspiece wasn't nailed or tied on, it grew on. I stopped.

You've seen branches grown to each other like that. Two sorts of wood, the straight-up piece darker than the crosspiece. But both pieces looked alive, though the ends had been cut or broken so long back the raw was gone and the splinters rubbed off. Little-bitty twigs sprouted, with broad light-green leaves on the crosspiece and narrow dark laurel-looking ones on the straight pole. Roots reached into the grave, to sprout the cross. And letters were carved on, shaky and deep-dug and different sizes:

PRAy
foR
HosEA PALMeR

So here was where Hosea Palmer had lain down the last time, and some friend had buried him with the word to pray for him. Standing alone in the unchanciness, I did what the cross bade. In my heart I prayed, *Let the good man rest as he's earned the right and when it's my time, O Lord, let me rest as I've earned the right; and bless the kind soul who made and marked a long home for Hosea Palmer, amen.*

While always my hands moved to pick that inner-heard tune, slow and quiet like a hymn. Still picking, I strolled around another curve, and there before me was a cabin.

I reckoned one main room with clay chinking, with a split-plank door on leather hinges and a window curtained inside with tanned hide. A shed-roofed leanto was tacked to the left, and it and the main cabin had shake shingles pegged on.

The door opened, and I popped behind a tree as a girl came out.

Small-made; yet you saw she was grown and you saw she was proud, though the color was faded from her cotton dress till it was gray as a dove. Her bright, sun-colored hair was tied behind her neck with a blue ribbon. She brought a rusty old axe with her, walking proud toward a skimpy woodpile, and on her feet were flat, homemade shoes with the hair still on the cowhide. The axe was wobble-handled, but there was strength in her little round arms. She made the axe chew the wood into pieces enough for an armful, carried the wood back into the cabin, and came out again with an old hoe on her shoulder.

From the dug well she drew the bucket—it was old, too, with a couple of silver trickles leaking from it. She dipped a drink with a gourd dipper and lowered the bucket again. Then she went to

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the cleared patch past the cabin, and leaned on the hoe to look at the plants growing.

There was shin-high corn, and what looked like cabbages. She studied them, and her face was lovely. I saw that she yearned for her little crop to grow into food for her. She began to chop the ground up along a row, and I slid off down trail again, past the grave to where I heard water talking to itself.

I found a way through the trees to the waterside. Lay flat and took a big drink, and washed my face and hands. I dropped my gear on a flat rock, then unlaced my shoes and let the water wash my feet. Finally I cut a pole, tied on a string and hook and baited it with a scrap of smoke meat.

Fishing was good. Gentlemen, fresh fish are pretty things, they show you the reason for the names they've earned — shiner, sunfish, rainbow trout. Not that I caught any such, but what I caught was all right. When I had six I opened my knife to clean them, and built a fire and propped a stone beside it to fry meat on and then a couple of fish for supper. They ate good, just as the sun went down across the funny trees, and I wondered about the bright-haired girl, if she had a plenty to eat.

Finally, in the last dim light, I took my handaxe and chopped as much dry wood as I could tote. I wrapped the four other fish in leaves. I slung on my guitar, for I never walk off from that. Back I went along the trail to the cabin. Firelight danced in the window as I sneaked through the doryard, and bent to stack the wood by the threshold log and lay the fish on it.

"What are you doing?"

She'd ripped the door open, and she had the axe in her hand. I took a long jump away before she could swing that rusty blade.

She stood with feet apart and elbows square, to fill the door as much as her small self could. Her hair was down around her shoulders, and shone like gold fire in the light from inside.

"Oh," she said, and let the axe sink. "You're not—"

"Whom am I not?" I inquired her, trying hard to sound laughy.

She leaned tired on the axe. "Not Shull Cobart," she said.

"No, ma'am," I said. "You can say for me that I'm not Shull Cobart, nor I wouldn't be. I saw him once, and I'm honest to tell you he doesn't suit me." I pointed at what I'd brought. "I'm camped by the branch yonder. Had more fish and wood than I needed, and figured you might like them." I bowed to her. "Good night."

"Wait." There was a plea in that, and I waited. "What brought you here, Mr.—"

"I'm named John. And I just roamed in here, without thought of why."

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"I'm wondered, Mr.—"

"John," I named myself again.

"I'm wondered if you're the man I've heard tell of, named John, with a silver-strung guitar."

"Why," I said, "I'd not be amazed if I had the only silver-strung guitar there is. Nobody these days strings with silver but me."

"Then I've heard you called a good man." She looked down at the wood and the fish. "You've had your supper?" she asked, soft.

"Yes, ma'am, I've had my supper."

She picked up a fish. "I've not eaten. If you—maybe you'd like some coffee—"

"Coffee," I repeated her. "I'd mightily relish a cup."

She picked up the rest of the fish. "Come in, John," she bade me, and I gathered the wood in my arms and walked in after her.

"My name's Evadare," she told me.

The inside of the cabin was what I might expect from the outside. Chinked walls, a stone fireplace with wood burning in it, a table home-pegged together, two stools made of split chunks with tough branches for legs. In a corner was a pallet bed, made up on the floor with two old patch quilts. A mirror was stuck to the wall chinking—a woman purely has to have a mirror. Evadare took a fire-splinter from the hearth and lighted a candle stuck on the table in its own tallow. I saw by the glow how pinky-soft her skin was, how young and pretty; and bigger, bluer eyes than Evadare's you couldn't call for. At last she smiled, just a little hopeful smile.

I laid more wood to the fire, found a skillet and a chunk of fat meat. I rolled two fish in cornmeal and commenced frying them. She poured coffee from a tin pot into two tin cups. Watching, I had it in mind that the bottom of the pot was as sooty black as Shull Cobart's hair.

Finally I forked the fish on to an old cracked white plate for her. She ate, and I saw she was hungry. Again she smiled that little small smile, and filled my cup again.

"I'd not expected ary soul to come into Hosea's Hollow," she finally said.

"You expected Shull Cobart," I told her to receollect. "You said so."

"He'd come if anybody would, John."

"He didn't," I said. "And I did. Do you care to talk about it?"

She acted glad to talk about it, once she started.

She'd worked at weaving for Shull Cobart, with maybe nineten others, in a little town off in the hills. He took the cloth to places like Asheville and sold at a high mark to the touristers that came there. Once or twice he made to court Evadare, but she

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paid him no mind. But one day he went on a trip, and came again with the black fiddle.

"And he was different," she said. "He'd been scared and polite to folks before that. But the fiddle made him somebody else. He played at dances and folks danced their highest and fastest, but they were scared by his music, even when they flocked to it. He won prizes at fiddle-playing. He'd stand by the shop door and play to us girls, and the cloth we wove was more cloth and better cloth—but it was strange. Funny feel and funny look to it."

"Did the touristers still buy it?" I inquired her.

"Yes, and payed more for it, but they seemed scared while they were buying it. So I've heard tell from folks who saw."

"And Shull Cobart made you run off."

"It was when he said he wanted me to light his darkness."

I saw what those words meant. An evil man speaking them to a good girl, because his evil was hungry for good. "What did you reply him?"

"I said I wanted to be quiet and good, he wanted to be showy and scary. And he said that was just his reason, he wanted me for my goodness to his scariness." She shivered, the way folks shiver when ice falls outside the window. "I swore to go where he'd not follow. Then he played his fiddle, it somehow made to bind me hand and foot. I felt he'd tole me off with him then and there, but I pretended—"

She looked sad and ashamed of pretending, even in peril.

"I said I'd go with him next day. He was ready to wait. That night I ran off."

"And you came to Hosea's Hollow," I said. "How did you make yourself able?"

"I feared Kalu another sight less than I fear Shull Cobart," Evadare replied me. "And I've not seen Kalu—I've seen nothing. I heard a couple of things, though. Once something knocked at the door at night."

"What was it knocked, Evadare?"

"I wasn't so foolish for the lack of sense that I went to see." She shivered again, from her little toes up to her bright hair. "I dragged up the quilt and spoke the strongest prayer I remember, the old-timey one about God gives His angels charge over us by day and by night." Her blue eyes fluttered, remembering. "Whatever knocked gave one knock more and never again, that night or ary night since."

I was purely ready to talk of something else. "Who made this cabin for you?" I asked, looking around.

"It was here when I came—empty. But I knew good folks had made it, by the cross."

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I saw where her eyes went, to the inside of the half-shut door. A cross was cut there, putting me in mind of the grave by the trail.

"It must have been Hosea Palmer's cabin. He's dead and buried now. Who buried him?"

She shook her head. "That wonders me, too. All I know is, a good friend did it years ago. Sometimes, when I reckon maybe it's a Sunday, I say a prayer by the grave and sing a hymn. It seems brighter when I sing, looking up to the sky."

"Maybe I can guess the song you sing, Evadare." And I touched the guitar again, and both of us sang it:

Lights in the valley outshine the sun—
Look away beyond the blue!

As we sang I kept thinking in my heart—how pretty her voice, and how sweet the words in Evadare's mouth.

She went on to tell me how she hoped to live. She'd fetched in meal and salt and not much else, and she'd stretched it by picking wild greens, and there were some nuts here and there around the old cabin, poked away in little handfuls like the work of squirrels; though neither of us had seen a squirrel in Hosea's Hollow. She had planted cabbages and seed corn, and reckoned these would be worth eating by deep summer. She was made up in her mind to stay in Hosea's Hollow till she had some notion that Shull Cobart didn't lie in wait for her coming back.

"He's waiting," she felt sure. "He laughed when I spoke of running off. Said he'd know all I meant to do, all he needed was to wonder a thing while he played his fiddle and the answer was in his mind." Her pink tongue wet her lips. "He had a song he played, said it had power—"

"Was it maybe this one?" I asked, trying to jolly her, and again I touched the strings. I sang old words to the music I heard inside:

My pretty little pink, I once did think
That you and I would marry,
But now I've lost all hope of you,
And I've no time to tarry.

I'll take my sack upon my back,
My rifle on my shoulder,
And I'll be off to the Western States
To view the country over . . .

"That's the tune," she said, "but not the words." Again she shivered. "They were like something in a dream, while he played and sang along, and I felt I was trapped and tangled and webbed."

"Like something in a dream," I repeated her, and made up words

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like another thing I'd heard once, to fit the same music:

I dreamed last night of my true love,
All in my arms I had her,
And her locks of hair, all long and fair,
Hung round me like a shadow...

"That's not his song, either," said Evadare.

"No, it isn't," a voice I'd heard before came to agree her.

In through that half-open door stepped Shull Cobart, with his sooty hair and his grin, and his shiny black fiddle in his hand.

"Why don't you say me a welcome?" he asked Evadare, and cut his eyes across at me. "John, I counted on you being here, too."

Quick I leaned my guitar to the wall and got up. "Then you counted on trouble with me," I said. "Lay aside that fiddle so I won't break it when I break you."

But it was to his chin, and the bow across. "Hark before we fight," he said, and gentlemen, hush! how Shull Cobart could play.

It was the same tune, fiddled beyond my tongue's power to tell how wild and lovely. And the cabin that had had red-gold light from the fire and soft-gold light from Evadare's hair, it looked that quick to glow silver-pale, in jumping, throbbing sweeps as he played. Once, a cold clear dry winter night, I saw in the sky the Northern Lights; and the air in that cabin beat and throbbed and quivered the same way, but pale silver, I say, not warm red. And it came to my mind, harking helpless, that the air turned colder all at once than that winter night when I'd watched the Northern Lights in the sky.

I couldn't come at Shull Cobart. Somehow, to move at him was like moving neck-deep against a flooding river. I couldn't wear my way a foot closer. I sat on the stool again, and he stripped his teeth at me, grinning like a dog above a trapped rabbit.

"I wish the best for you, John," he said through the music. "Look how I make you welcome and at rest here."

I knew what way he wanted me to rest, the same way Hosea Palmer rested out yonder. I knew it wouldn't help to get up again, so I took back my guitar and sat quiet. I looked him up and down. He wore a suit of dark cloth with a red stripe, a suit that looked worth money, and his shoes were as shiny as his fiddle, ready to make manners before rich city folks. His mean dark eyes, close together above that singing, spell-casting fiddle, read my thoughts inside me.

"Yes, John, it's good cloth," he said. "My own weaving."

"I know how it was woven," Evadare barely whispered, the

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first words she'd spoken since Shull came in.

She'd moved halfway into a corner. Scared white—but she was a prettier thing than I'd ever seen in my life.

"Like me to weave for you?" he inquired me, mocking; and then he sang a trifly few words to his tune:

I wove this suit and I cut this suit,
And I put this suit right on,
And I'll weave nine yards of other cloth
To make a suit for John . . .

"Nine yards," I repeated after him.

"Would that be enough fine cloth for your suit?" he grinned across the droning fiddle strings. "You're long and tall, a right much of a man, but—"

"Nobody needs nine yards but for one kind of suit," I kept on figuring. "And that's no suit at all."

"A shroud," said Evadare, barely making herself heard, and how Shull Cobart laughed at her wide eyes and the fright in her voice!

"You reckon there'll be a grave for him here in Kalu's own place, Evadare?" he gobbled at her. "Would Kalu leave enough of John to be worth burying? I know about old Barebones Kalu."

"He's not hereabouts," Evadare half-begged to be believed. "Never once he bothered me."

"Maybe he's just spared you, hoping for something better," said Shull. "But he won't be of a mind to spare all of us that came here making a fuss in his home place. That's why I toled John here."

"You toled me?" I asked, and again he nodded.

"I played a little tune so you'd come alone, John. I reckoned Kalu would relish finding you here. Being he's the sort he is, and I'm the sort I am, it's you he'd make way with instead of me. That lets me free to take Evadare away."

"I'll not go with you," Evadare said, sharper and louder than I thought possible for her.

"Won't you, though?" Shull laughed.

His fiddle-music came up, and Evadare drew herself tight and strong, as if she leaned back against ropes on her. The music took on wild-sounding notes to fit into itself. Evadare's hands made fists, her teeth bit together, her eyes shut tight. She took a step, or maybe she was dragged. Another step she took, another, toward Shull.

I tried to get up, too, but I couldn't move as she was moving. I had to sit and watch, and I had the thought of that saying about how a snake draws a bird to his coil. I'd never believed such a thing till I saw Evadare move, step by step she didn't want to take, toward Shull Cobart.

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Suddenly he stopped playing, and breathed hard, like a man who's been working in the fields. Evadare stood still and rocked on her feet. I took up my muscles to make a jump, but Shull pointed his fiddle-bow at me, like a gun.

"Have sense!" he slung out. "You've both learned I can make you go or stay, whichever I want, when I fiddle as I know how. Sit down, Evadare, and I'll silence my playing for the time. But make a foolish move, John, and I might play a note that would have the bones out of your body without ary bit of help from Kalu."

Bad man as he was, he told the truth, and both of us knew it. Evadare sat on the other stool, and I put my guitar across my knees. Shull Cobart leaned against the door jamb, his fiddle low against his chest, and looked sure of himself. At that instant I was dead sure I'd never seen a wickeder face, not among all the wicked faces of the wide world.

"Know where I got this fiddle, you two?" he asked.

"I can guess," I said, "and it spoils my notion of how good a trader a certain old somebody is. He didn't make much of a swap, that fiddle for your soul; for the soul was lost before you bargained."

"It wasn't a trade, John." He plucked a fiddle-string with his thumbnail. "Just a sort of little present between friends."

"I've heard the fiddle called the devil's instrument," said Evadare, back to her soft whisper; and once again Shull Cobart laughed at her, and then at me.

"Folks have got a sight to learn about fiddles. This fiddle will make you and me rich, Evadare. We'll go to the land's great cities, and I'll play the dollars out of folks' pockets and the hearts out of folks' bodies. They'll honor me, and they'll bow their faces in the dirt before your feet."

"I'll not go with you," she told him again.

"No? Want me to play you right into my arms this minute? The only reason I don't, Evadare—and my arms want you, and that's a fact—I'd have to put down my fiddle to hold you right."

"And I'd be on you and twist your neck around like the stem on a watch," I added onto that. "You know I can do it, and so do I. Any moment it's liable to happen."

As he'd picked his fiddle-string, I touched a silver string of my guitar, and it sang like a honeybee.

"Don't do that any more, John," he snapped. "Your guitar and my fiddle don't tune together. I'm a lone player."

To his chin went that shiny black thing, and the music he made lay heavy on me. He sang:

I'll weave nine yards of other cloth

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For John to have and keep,
He'll need it where he's going
to lie,
To warm him in his sleep . . .

"What are we waiting for?" I broke in. "You might kill me somehow with your fiddling, but you won't scare me."

"Kalu will do the scaring," he said as he stopped again. "Scare you purely to death. We're just a-waiting for him to come."

"How will we know—" began Evadare .

"We'll know," said Shull, the way he'd promise a baby child something. "We'll hear him. Then I'll play John out of here to stand face to face wih Kalu, if it's really a face Kalu has."

I laughed myself, and heaven pardon me the lie I put into my laugh, trying to sound as if naught pestered me. Shull frowned; he didn't like how my laugh hit his ear.

"Just for argument's sake," I said to him, "how do you explain what you say your music can do?"

"I don't do any explaining. I just do the playing."

"I've heard tell how a fiddler can be skilled to where he plays a note and breaks a glass window," I recollected. "I've heard tell that he might possibly even make a house fall down."

"Dogs howl when fiddles play," said Evadare. "From pain it makes."

Shull nodded at us both. "You folks are right. There's been power-music long before this. Ever hear of a man named Orpheus?"

"He was an old-timey Greek," I said.

"He played his harp, and trees danced for him. He played his way down to the floor of hell, and back out again. Maybe I've got some of that power. A fiddle can sing extra sharp or extra sweet, and its sound's solid—like a knife or club or rope, if you can work it."

I remembered in my mind that sound goes in waves like light, and can be measured; and a wave is power, whether of sound or light. Waves can wash, like the waves of the sea that strike down tall walls and strong men. Too bad, I decided, that educated folks couldn't use that black fiddle, to make its power good and useful. In devil-taught hands, it was the devil's instrument. Not like my silver-strung guitar, the way harps, certain harps in a certain high place, are said to be strung with gold . . .

Shull listened. You could almost see his ears stick up, like the ears of an animal. "Something's out there," he said.

I heard it, too. Not a step or a scramble, but a movement.

"Kalu," said Evadare, her eyes the widest yet in the firelight.

"Yes, it's Kalu," said Shull. "John, wouldn't it be kindlier to

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the lady if you met him outside?"

"Much kindlier," I agreed him, and got up.

"You know this isn't personal, John," Shull said, fiddle at his chin. "But Kalu's bound to have somebody. It won't be Evadare, because some way he's let her be. And it won't be me, with you here. You've got a reputation, John, for doing things against what Kalu stands to represent. I figure he wants something good, because he's got plenty of the strong evil."

"The way you think you've got to have Evadare," I said.

"That's it. You're in the line of what he wants to devour." He began to play again. "Come on, John."

I was coming. I'd made up my mind. The weight of the music was on me, but not quite as deadening and binding as before. Shull Cobart walked out, fiddling. I just winked at Evadare, as if I figured it would be all right. Then I walked out, too.

The light was greeny-pale, though I saw no moon. Maybe the trees hid it, or the haze in the sky.

"Where will you face him?" asked Shull, almost polite above his soft playing.

"There's a grave down yonder —" I began to say.

"Yes, just the place. Come on."

I followed after him on the trail. My left hand chorded my guitar at the neck, my right-hand fingers found the strings. What was it Evadare had told me? ... *I say a prayer by the grave and sing a hymn. It seems brighter when I sing* ...

Then there could be two kinds of power-music.

I began to pick the tune along with Shull, softer even than Evadare's whisper. He didn't hear; and, because I followed him like a calf to the slaughter-pen, he didn't guess.

Around the bend was the grave, the green light paler around it. Shull stopped. All of a quick, I knew Kalu was in the trees over us. Somewhere up there, he made a heaviness in the branches.

"Stand where you want to, John. I vow, you've played the man so far."

I moved past him, close to the cross, though there wasn't light enough to see the name or the prayer.

"Drop that guitar!" Shull howled at me.

For I began to play loud, and I sang to his tune, changing the rhythm for my own quick-made-up words:

I came to where the pilgrim lay,
Though he was dead and gone,
And I could hear his comrade say,
He rests in peace alone—

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"Hush up with that!"

Shull Cobart stopped playing and ran at me. I ducked away and around the cross, and quick I sang the second verse:

Winds may come and thunders roll
And stormy tempests rise,
But here he sleeps with a restful soul
And the tears wipes from his eyes–

"Come for him, Kalu!" Shull screamed.

Kalu drop-leaped out of the branches between us.

Gentlemen, don't ask me to say too much what Kalu was. Bones, yes – something like man-bones, but bigger and thicker, also something like bear-bones, or big ape-bones from a foreign land. And a rotten light to them, so I saw for a moment that the bones weren't empty. Inside the ribs were caged puffy things, like guts and lungs and maybe a heart that skipped and wiggled. The skull had a snout like I can't say what, and in its eye-holes burned blue-green fire. Out came the arm-bones, and the finger-bones were on Shull Cobart.

I heard Shull Cobart scream one more time, and then Kalu had him, like a bullfrog with a minnow. And Kalu was back up in the branches. Standing by the grave, still tweaking my strings, I heard the branches rustle, and no more sounds after that from Shull Cobart.

After while, I walked to where the black fiddle lay. I stomped with my foot, heard it smash, and kicked the pieces away.

Walking back to the cabin seemed to take an hour. I stopped at the door.

"No!" moaned Evadare, and then she just looked at me. "John –but–"

"That's twice you thought I was Shull Cobart," I said.

"Kalu–"

"Kalu took *him*, not me."

"But–" She stopped again.

"I figured the truth about Kalu and Hosea Palmer, walking out with Shull," I began to explain. "All at once I knew why Kalu never pestered you. You'll wonder why you didn't know it, too."

"But–" she tried once more.

"Think," I bade her. "Who buried Hosea Palmer, with a cross and a prayer? What dear friend could he have, when he came in here alone? Who was left alive here when it was Hosea Palmer's time to die?"

She just shook her head from side to side.

"It was Kalu," I said. "Remember the story, all of it. Hosea Palmer said he knew how to stop Kalu's wickedness. Folks think Hosea destroyed Kalu some way. But what he did was teach him the good part of things. They

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weren't enemies. They were friends."

"Oh," she said. "Then—"

"Kalu buried Hosea Palmer," I finished for her, "and cut his name and the prayer. Hosea must have taught him his letters. But how could Shull Cobart understand that? It wasn't for us to know, even, till the last minute. And Kalu took the evil man, to punish him."

I sat on the door-log, my arms around my guitar.

"You can go home now, Evadare," I said. "Shull Cobart won't vex you again, by word of mouth or by sight of his face."

She'd been sitting all drawn up, as small as she could make herself. Now she managed to stand.

"Where will you go, John?"

"There's all the world for me to go through. I'll view the country over. Think me a kind thought once in a while when we're parted."

"Parted?" she said after me, and took a step, but not as if a web of music dragged her. "John. Let me come with you."

I jumped up. "With me? You don't want to go with me, Evadare."

"Let me come." Her hand touched my arm, trembling like a bird.

"How could I do that, take you with me? I live hard."

"I've not lived soft, John." But she said it soft and lovely, and it made my heart ache with what I hadn't had time before to feel for her.

"I don't have a home," I said.

"Folks make you welcome everywhere. You're happy. You have enough of what you need. There's music wherever you go. John, I want to hear the music and help the song."

I wanted to try to laugh that thought away, but I couldn't laugh. "You don't know what you say. Listen, I'll go now. Back to my camp, and I'll be out of here before sunup. Evadare, God bless you wherever you go."

"Don't you want me to go with you, John?"

I couldn't dare reply her the truth of that. Make her a wanderer of the earth, like me? I ran off. She called my name once, but I didn't stop. At my camp again, I sat by my died-out fire, wondering, then wishing, then driving the wish from me.

In the black hour before dawn, I got my stuff together and started out of Hosea's Hollow. I came clear of it as the light rose, and mounted up a trail to a ridge above. Something made me look back.

Far down the trail I'd come, I saw her. She leaned on a stick, and she carried some kind of bundle—maybe her quilts, and what little food she had. She was following.

"That fool-headed girl," I said,

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all alone to myself, and I up and ran down the far side. It was hours until I crossed the bottom below and mounted another ridge beyond. On the ridge I'd left behind I saw Evadare still moving after me, her little shape barely bigger than a fly. Then I thought of that song I've told you before:

On yonder hill there stands a creature,
Who she is I do not know,
I will ask her if she'll marry . . .
Oh, no, John, no, John, no!

But she didn't stand, she came on. And I knew who she was. And if I asked her to marry she wouldn't answer no.

The rest of that day I fled from her, not stopping to eat, only to grab mouthfuls of water from streams. And in the dusky last end of the day I sat quiet and watched her still coming, leaning on her stick for weariness, and knew I must go down trail to meet her.

She was at the moment when she'd drop. She'd lost her ribbon, and the locks of her hair fell round her like a shadow. Her dress was torn, her face was white-tired, and the rocks had cut her shoes to pieces and the blood seeped out of her torn feet.

She couldn't even speak. She just sagged into my arms when I held them out to her.

I carried her to my camp. The spring trickled enough so I could wash her poor cut feet. I put down her quilt and my blanket for her to sit on, with her back to a big rock. I mixed a pone of cornmeal to bake on a flat stone, and strung a few pieces of meat on a green twig. I brought her water in my cupped hand.

"John," she managed at last to speak my name.

"Evadare," I said, and we both smiled at each other, and I sat down beside her.

"I'll cease from wandering," I vowed to her. "I'll get a piece of land and put up a cabin. I'll plant and hoe a crop for us—"

"No such thing, John! I'm tired now – so tired – but I'll get over that. Let's just—view the country over."

I pulled my guitar to me, and remembered another verse to the old song that fitted Shull Cobart's tune:

And don't you think she's a pretty little pink,
And don't you think she's clever,
And don't you think that she and I
Could make a match forever?

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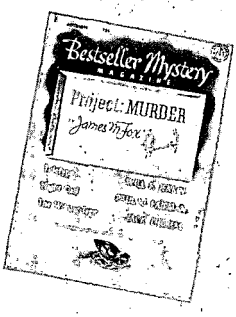

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